

but i still see it

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but i still see it

by Anonymous

Summary

Skeppy blows the whistle again. George watches Sapnap score once more and Bad catch another two goals.

Then, a guy walks onto the pitch.

Notes

hello! i hope you enjoy this fic. first id like to establish some things:

- please dont send this to any ccs (in this vein; if any of the featured creators discuss being uncomfortable with fanfiction, i will change/remove/delete accordingly)
- take any information with a grain of salt; i am a fool who doesnt play football and this is just for fun. 90% of the irl things mentioned have been warped slightly to fit my au (up to and including any teams/players/places mentioned)

- any links, in notes and work text, will be safe. feel free to click them when they pop up! some lead to music, some lead to sources to enhance the reading experience, and they'll be underlined in the work text (this is NOT for emphasis, anything underlined is clickable!)

- thank u for reading!

chapter title from [mysterious girl](#)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

i stop and stare at you

“George! Wait up!”

George glances behind him. Sapnap is there, holding a water bottle in one hand and a pair of headphones in the other. He looks out of breath. “What?”

“Wait for me! I wanna talk to you.”

He slows to a jog, letting Sapnap catch up. It's early this morning, and the fog is only just beginning to rise off the grass. “What do you want?”

Sapnap hooks his headphones around his neck. “Did you get Sam's email the other day?”

“No?”

“Oh. Well, he's coming out for training tomorrow. Says he has something important to talk to us about,” Sapnap says. George starts to jog faster, wondering just how fast he'd have to run to lap Sapnap. “Dunno what it is. But I overheard Bad talking about it. He thinks Sam's found a new player, or something.”

“We don't need a new player.”

“Exactly. But then Wilbur started talking about how Phil said he was going to leave the team; you know his wife is about to go on maternity leave, right?”

George frowns. “So you think he's getting a player to replace Phil?”

“Maybe,” Sapnap says. He unscrews the cap of his water bottle. “If Phil's having a kid, maybe he's gonna leave the team.”

“Phil is one of the best players,” George says. “I hope he doesn't. And why did no one talk to me about this? I'm the captain.”

“You'll have to ask Sam. You might be the captain but he is the manager.”

“I guess.”

“Anyway,” Sapnap continues, “who do you think it'll be?”

“I have no idea.”

“Make a guess! Techno's been going through all the teen clubs, seeing who's about to age out of them and if Sam's scouted one of them. He found a kid named Tommy who looked pretty promising,” Sapnap says. “Hyperactive as fuck though. He's a good player, but would be hard to control on the field.”

“I don't want a new player.”

Sapnap keeps talking like George didn't even speak. “But Skeppy said that he thought it was a kid called Tubbo, because apparently Sam's been keeping tabs on him for a while.”

“Sure.”

“I think it’ll be neither of them, though. I think it’ll be someone Phil recommended. He’s been talking about that Dream guy a lot the past few days, right? Maybe it’ll be him. I hope so. He seems cool.”

“Whatever.” It’s almost impressive how Sapnap manages to ramble and run at the same time.

“But I guess Tommy and Tubbo would be cool too. They’d be pretty young, though, right?”

“You’re pretty young too.”

“Okay, Grandpa. Although, maybe a younger player would be just what we needed. Especially to help win the league this year,” Sapnap says. “Not that the age of our players is why we *lost* last year. But maybe we need a refresh.”

“What are you even talking about?”

“Well, who do you think it’d be, then?”

“I already said I don’t know,” George says. He tries to run faster, hoping Sapnap will get the hint. He doesn’t. “I don’t know, and I don’t care, and I don’t even want a new player. If Phil leaves, we already have Q on the bench. He’s the next most viable player.”

“Quackity won’t want to play in the league though.”

“That’s why we have more than one player on the bench.”

“But maybe we need a *new* player.”

“Maybe we don’t.”

Sapnap groans. “Geooooorge. Why are you so grumpy all the time? Maybe you should stop going on runs before the sun is even up.”

“You’re here too.”

“But I’m not grumpy,” Sapnap says. He says it in an extremely annoying way, but he says most things like that too. “In fact, I’m a delight.”

“Sure.”

“You just totally proved my point.”

“You’re such a bitch.”

“You just proved my point again.”

“Oh, my God.”

Sapnap laughs. He tries to take a drink from his water bottle and ends up spilling it everywhere. “Why don’t you want a new player?”

“The team is fine the way it is. We all get along, right?”

“Yeah.”

“So why would you want to add a new player into the mix?” George says, “that could just ruin our

whole dynamic. If we want to win the league this year, then we don't want to fuck that up before we play."

"Or adding a new player could make us better and give us an even better chance to win," Sapnap counters. "Were you always this cynical?"

"Shut up."

It makes Sapnap laugh. "Just give the new guy a chance, if he turns up. Hey, what do you think Phil should name his baby when it arrives?"

"Probably whatever he and his wife agree on."

"I think he should call it Sapnap," Sapnap says, "you know, after the best guy they know."

"If they want the kid to get bullied, sure."

"Hey, what about Sapnap George? That's kinda cute."

"George Sapnap would be better."

"I'm gonna tell that to Phil," Sapnap says. George tries to run faster until his thighs burn. Unfortunately, Sapnap still manages to keep up with him.

"If you tell that to Phil, I will literally kick you off the team," he says.

"You wouldn't dare."

"Try me."

"How would you win the league without me, then? I'm your best offense player right now and you know it."

"What about Techno?"

"Techno doesn't count," Sapnap says. "I'm the best for PR and offense."

"Sure you are. Techno is great for PR."

"Have you seen that guy when he has to do an interview?" Sapnap scoffs. "He freezes up and glares until the interviewer runs away. I, at least, make everyone fall in love with me."

"Two sides of the same coin."

"What do you even mean by that?"

"Don't worry about it," George says. "Can we just run?"

"We are running."

"I mean, can we just run and you shut up for like twenty minutes while we do it?"

Sapnap sticks his foot out until George trips over it.

"You are literally the worst."

Sam meets him in the locker room the next day, five minutes before practice officially begins. No one's even here yet. George feels immeasurable disappointment in his team: it's a wonder they even make it to matches on time.

“George? Can I talk to you for a sec?”

George pulls his socks up over the shin pads. “Sure. What’s up?”

Sam sits on the bench next to him. “You might have heard about this from the team. I sent them an email the other day, but I wanted to talk to you about it in person.”

“Is this about Phil leaving?”

“What? Phil isn’t leaving.”

“He isn’t?” George fiddles with the hem of the sock. “Thank God. Sapnap said he was.”

“No. He just asked to be moved down to the bench until his wife gives birth, you know?” Sam clarifies. “Phil’s one of the best defense players. I wouldn’t let him resign until hell freezes over.”

George laughs with him. “Good. I wouldn’t want to let any other club snatch him up. So what is this about?”

“Well, if Phil moves to bench, then we’re gonna need someone to replace him on the pitch,” Sam says. “I spoke to Quackity, he said he’d rather stay on the bench. Callahan isn’t trained for field, he’ll have to stay as goalie. So I asked if Phil had any recommendations for who could replace him.”

“Why didn’t you tell me any of this until now?”

“Phil asked me not to,” Sam says. George frowns at him, gesturing for the other sock. Sam reaches into his duffle, passing it over. “He knew you’d refuse as soon as I mentioned a new player. So I got in contact with this guy. Phil mentioned him, but he’s been on my radar for a while. He’ll be coming to practice today so we can get a feel for him.”

“What?”

“Nothing is confirmed,” Sam hurries to say. “Final decision falls to you. But just give him a chance, okay? Keep an open mind. He’s a great player, and I think he’ll fit in well with the team.”

“Is it that Dream guy?”

“You know him?”

George shakes his head. He leans down to pull the other sock up. “No. Sapnap brought it up yesterday. He’s the club gossip.”

Sam chuckles. “Well, he’s right. It is Dream. And you know I’d never invite him to train if I didn’t think you’d approve of him, right?”

“...Sure.”

“George.”

“I know,” he says. He slips his feet into his boots, lacing them up tightly. “I hope this ends well. I hope it isn’t like last time.”

Sam’s face clouds over. “It won’t be. I wouldn’t let that happen again.”

“I still worry.”

“I know,” Sam says. He chews the inside of his cheek. “I do too. But I trust Dream, okay? And I think we’ll all like him.”

“I hope you’re right,” George says. “I don’t think the team could weather another Schlatt.”

Dream is late.

It’s not the best first impression. George leans against the goal post, watching Sapnap and Bad practice penalty shots. Skeppy keeps snatching Sam’s whistle and blowing it. Techno, Wilbur, and Phil are watching something on Wilbur’s phone.

They’re all bored. Whenever George tries to start practice, Sam glares at him until he stops. It’s frustrating. It’s stupid.

George hates this new guy already.

“Where even is he?” Sapnap calls out, after he’s shot five goals in a row.

Bad shrugs. He collects the ball from the left corner of the net, tossing it back to Sapnap. “I don’t know. Hopefully he gets here soon, or we’ll run out of time.”

“Tell me about it,” George says.

Bad looks at him sympathetically. “It’ll be fine, right? Sam likes him, Phil likes him. Even if he’s late, at least he’ll be kind.”

“Sure,” George says. He disagrees: Dream must be incredibly unprofessional to be running so late to his first meet with a prospective new team. It doesn’t bode well for the rest of the season. Already, he has more points against him than for him, even if he does turn out to be as good as Sam and Phil think he is.

“Alright!” Sam calls. He looks at his watch doubtfully. Some part of George is glad that he seems just as concerned about Dream’s lateness. “Let’s give it five more minutes before we start without him.”

Skeppy blows the whistle again. George watches Sapnap score once more and Bad catch another two goals.

Then, a guy walks onto the pitch.

He’s tall; taller than Sapnap but not as tall as Wilbur, and looks kind of sheepish. He has blond-brown hair - mostly brown until it catches the light - and green-ish sort of eyes. They look sort of like murky pond water. He has a long thin scar running across the bridge of his nose and marring the left corner of his lip too, and George tries not to stare at it.

“Is that him?” Sapnap asks. He drops the ball, letting it bounce. The entire pitch falls silent. “He’s kinda hot.”

Sam snatches his whistle back from Skeppy, blowing it twice to beckon them all over. Slowly, the team gathers around the lower benches, all looking sort of nervous and unsure. George isn’t sure he’s ever seen the team this quiet.

“Alright! This is our prospective new player,” Sam announces. “Dream. He’s been playing for a while, I’ve seen his skills. I think he’s gonna be a great fit in the team if we decide to take him on. Today, he’ll take Phil’s place in our practice to see how we all get on. Sound okay?”

They all nod slowly. Dream smiles, looking almost as nervous as George feels. He decides he hates him already.

“Good,” Sam says. “Then let’s get started, okay? George, tell us what you want.”

George is professional enough to not let his personal biases get in the way of his job. He steps forward and meets everyone’s eyes but Dream’s. “Okay. I want Sapnap, Eret, Wilbur, Fundy, and Punz on one team. Techno, Skeppy, Bad, Dream, and I will be on the other. Ant can goalie for us, Callahan for the others. First to score wins.”

Sam tosses him the whistle, sitting back to join Quackity and Phil on the bench. Everyone else jogs to take their place on the field. Dream finds Phil’s space easily, standing centre left. George takes centre right, wondering if they’ll be able to play the same way he and Phil did.

“On the whistle!” He shouts. Sapnap grins at him, waggling his eyebrows. George ignores him and blows.

Dream rushes the ball immediately, dribbling it forward towards Callahan’s goal. George isn’t expecting it, running to catch up on autopilot. Eret starts to tackle him, but Dream acts as if he knew it would happen before it did, and only reflex allows George to catch his pass.

He keeps dribbling it down pitch, dodging Wilbur and Fundy when they try to intercept before passing it back to Techno. Techno flicks the ball up and around, only just managing to dodge Punz before Sapnap snatches it from him and passes it over to Fundy.

Dream is there before George can even start running, so he stays down pitch. If Dream plays it right, he can pass to Bad.

He does, and Bad passes to Skeppy. Skeppy dribbles back to centre, where Dream meets him and takes the ball. George runs forward to receive from him, kicking until he’s halfway to Callahan’s goal, and then he shoots.

He scores. Skeppy cheers, grabbing Bad in a tackle and ruffling his hair. Callahan grins too, pulling the ball from the back of the net and shooting it over to a waiting Techno. Dream looks almost proud, chewing his lower lip.

George watches him. Sapnap gives him a knowing look, one that George decides to adamantly ignore.

He blows the whistle and everyone starts to jog towards him. Techno passes the ball to Wilbur half heartedly, who stops in his tracks and flicks it up with the toe of his boot, bouncing it on his knee before catching it.

“That was pretty good,” he says, once they’re all in hearing distance. “We’ll go again, but switch

the teams up. I want Techno, Bad, Dream, Eret, and Punz, with Callahan in goal. Sap, Skeppy, Wilbur, Fundy, and I, with Ant in goal. Okay?"

George meets Sam's eye across the pitch. He looks at him like, *I told you so*. George is exceptionally professional, so he sticks his middle finger up at Sam and grins back. Sapnap sees, and struggles to contain his laughter, even when George kicks his shin.

"You're an idiot," Sapnap says. "I told you this would go well."

"Shut up." George blows the whistle before Sapnap can say anything else, starting the game.

Dream immediately runs for the ball again, but passes it to Techno as soon as he gets it. Sapnap tackles Techno, stealing the ball, but he trips over it and George is too busy laughing to pick it up. Dream gets it back with a high spirited grin, passing it to Punz.

He and Punz volley it back and forth towards Ant's goal before Skeppy intercepts it, dribbling it to Wilbur and down towards Callahan. George shadows Wilbur, ready to step in, but Dream gets there first, tackling Wilbur and working a groove into the astro.

George grimaces. Dream is probably the best at tackles, after Techno. In fact, Dream is starting to seem the best at most of the plays.

Sapnap gets the ball from Dream, running around him in a circle with it before passing it to George. George sends it back to Fundy, until Dream is there *again*.

He dribbles the ball away, into the further corner of the pitch. It's too far for George to intercept, too far for any of them to, and Dream seems to know this. He lines up, runs back, and when he kicks the ball, it soars over the pitch and straight into the far corner of Ant's goal.

George bites his tongue. Goddamnit. He blows the whistle, directing everyone back to the bench. Sam and Phil keep looking at him, like they knew exactly that this would happen.

"Let's take a break," George says. "Five minutes. Get some water. We'll switch out teams when we get back; I want Q on pitch. I'll sit out."

"You sure?" Sapnap says. The rest of the team start to disperse, relocating to their water bottles and the locker room.

"Yeah. I want to watch how you all play together."

"You just wanna watch my ass in these shorts, you mean," Sapnap says.

George shoves him. "That is so far from the truth, you don't even know. Go get some water, Sapass."

Sapnap grins at him before jogging off to the locker room. His laugh is annoying.

George takes the seat next to Sam, leaning back into the plastic and groaning.

Phil laughs at him. "Not what you thought he'd be, huh?"

"You can say that again."

"Maybe you should listen to us more," Sam says. "You know neither of us would try to sabotage the team by inviting a crappy player."

“I know,” George says. “I just... You know why I was apprehensive. I still don’t like it. But... I guess he is a good player.”

“He’ll fit in here,” Phil says. “He’s better than I am.”

“Don’t say that.”

“No, he is,” he repeats. George starts to protest again. “I’m better at defense, Dream is an offensive player. He’ll work well with you, Techno, or Sapnap. And he’ll adapt well to Bad, too.”

“I guess,” George says. He agrees. Dream seems a pretty well-rounded player, and Phil’s right, they needed that. “I just hope we can get close enough before the league properly starts.”

“I think that’ll happen sooner than you think it will,” Sam says. He nudges George’s shoulder, pointing out Dream and Sapnap returning from the locker room. They’re practically hand in hand, grinning at each other like they just met their soulmates.

George grimaces. “Oh, for Christ’s sake.”

“They’ll be sharing water bottles before the day is over,” Phil says.

“Don’t even joke about that,” George says. He hates it, because he knows Sapnap probably will.

Sapnap meets him on his run the next day too. He looks tired, like he barely had time to brush his hair before leaving the house. George grimaces at the sight of him, and starts jogging immediately, wondering if he can get enough of a headstart to stay at least fifteen feet ahead of Sapnap.

Unfortunately, he can’t. Sapnap grins and waves as soon as he sees him, and some otherly force stops George in his tracks until Sapnap reaches him.

“Hey, George!”

“Hi, Sapnap.”

“Nice morning, isn’t it?” Sapnap says. He’s wearing neon pink sneakers today. George wants to throw up just looking at them.

“Not really.” It’s drizzling, sort of cold but sort of humid at the same time. The rain sticks to his skin, and it’s so cloudy he can’t tell if the sun has risen or not.

Sapnap glances towards the sky, shrugging. “Oh well. So how’d you think practice went yesterday?”

“It went okay.” George starts running, not waiting to see if Sapnap will run with him.

“Only okay? ‘Cause I thought it went pretty well. Dream seems to fit right in, right? I mean, he’s a great player. I was kinda nervous, honestly,” Sapnap says, “I mean, I trust Phil and Sam, obviously, but I’ll admit I had my doubts.”

“Right.”

“But I’m glad he turned out amazing. He’s a great player. Almost as good as Techno! We’ll win all of our matches now he’s on the team.” Sapnap pauses. “He is… on the team. Right?”

George shakes his head. He doesn’t turn back to see Sapnap’s reaction. “I haven’t accepted yet.”

“What?!”

“I said-”

“Why not?” Sapnap demands. “He’s a great player, he’s nice, he’s talented. He fits with the team. Come on, George, we’re never going to find a better player than him.”

“What about Techno?”

“Okay, well. Techno’s an exception.”

George huffs. His left foot skids slightly on a looser patch of grass. “I don’t know, Sapnap. He seems alright, I guess. I don’t know if I’ll sign off on him, though.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t like him.”

“What- because he was late? Because he got along with everyone? Because he immediately adapted to all of our play styles? Because he scored fifty per cent of all the goals, no matter who’s team he was on, and if he didn’t, he definitely assisted in them? Because he’s, like, the best player we’ve ever had since Techno joined?”

“You’ve been thinking about this,” George accuses.

“Of course I have! Because I knew you wouldn’t,” Sapnap says. He slows down in the middle of the track, forcing George to slow too. “Sam asked you to keep an open mind. And George, come on. He’s a great player. Even if you don’t like him, you have to admit that.”

“I know he’s a great player,” George says. “And I don’t not like him!”

“Then why won’t you sign him?”

George glares at the grass. He doesn’t answer, instead turning back around to keep running. Unfortunately, he’s still close enough to hear Sapnap sigh and yell after him, “don’t avoid the question!”

There isn’t another practice for two days. In the meantime, Sapnap sends him an extortionate amount of cat memes and links to sites that George doesn’t even dare click on. Sam sends him Dream’s contact details, and Phil asks for his opinions on possible baby names (George suggests Jack and Paige).

He adds Dream’s number to his phone, but doesn’t text. He sits on an open message for almost an hour before powering his phone off and burying his face in a pillow. Goddamnit. George doesn’t even know why. He doesn’t even *like* Dream.

The only redeeming factor about him is his sports ability. George deliberately does not think about his brown-blond hair and pond water eyes. He doesn't think about Dream's number sitting in his phone, waiting for a yes, or about the links Sapnap keeps sending (which definitely lead to pages like: *How to tell your coworker you love them*, or *How to make your colleague fall in love with you*, or *Office sex with hot blond*.)

He doesn't think. He screams into a pillow, and ignores everything for the few days he has away from the team.

Despite his best efforts, Dream seems to invade his every thought anyway.

“You look exhausted,” is how Sapnap greets him the next time they have training. George glares at him from across the locker room.

“Shut up.”

Sapnap dumps his duffel bag on the bench, pulling his shin pads and socks out of the side pocket.
“You do. What’s up?”

“Nothing’s up.”

“Something is up,” he pushes, “you never look this tired. Especially not after a few days off.”

George shakes his head. “Just leave it.”

“George...”

“I said leave it.”

“...Okay, then,” Sapnap says. “You know Phil won’t be here today, right?”

“I know.”

“His wife has to go in for a scan,” Sapnap continues.

“I know.”

“For the baby,” Sapnap keeps speaking, “she’s like, twenty weeks now.”

“I know.”

“Phil must be so excited. I know I would be,” he starts to pull the shin pads and socks on. “Do you think it’ll be a boy or a girl?”

“I don’t know.”

“I hope it’s a boy. Maybe they’ll have a load of other kids and then they can start a family football team,” Sapnap says. He chuckles. “That would be pretty funny.”

“Sure.”

“Do you think he’d give me some ultrasound pictures if I asked?”

George grimaces. “That’s kind of creepy.”

Sapnap sighs. He starts to tie the laces on his boots. “I guess it is. Do you think Dream will be on time today?”

“I hope so,” George says. “I definitely won’t sign him if he keeps showing up late.”

“You mean you haven’t said yes yet? George!”

“What?”

“You can’t keep him hanging like this,” Sapnap says, like it’s obvious. “Come on, man. At least tell him you’re still considering. He’ll leave of his own accord, and then we’ll have to play *against* him in the league. George, we won’t be able to hold our own against him.”

“Sure we will.”

“Sure we *won’t*.”

“We’re a good team, Sap,” George says, “with or without Dream. I’ll talk to him after practice, okay?”

“Do you promise?”

George glares at him, picking up his water bottle and hoodie. “I promise. You’re an idiot.”

“I’ll tell Sam!” George decides this is his cue to leave, and Sapnap hasn’t finished tying his laces.

“Shut up!” he calls on his way out to the pitch.

He still doesn’t know what to say to Dream. After spending the past two days with his head buried in a cushion and staring at a blank message board, he still hasn’t come up with anything helpful.

Outside on the pitch, Sam, Quackity, Eret, Wilbur, and Techno are already gathered. Quackity has found an unopened box of tennis balls from somewhere and seems to be pelting Techno with them, who catches each one and throws them back with unfailing accuracy.

Wilbur laughs each time, sitting back on the astro with Eret and Sam. George goes to join them, trying to avoid the torrent of tennis balls.

“Hey, George,” Sam says. He sounds distracted today, glued to his phone with several notebooks piled beside him. Probably managerial stuff, George thinks. He doesn’t want to get involved with it.

“Hey.”

“Have you made a decision about Dream yet?” Sam asks. He doesn’t look up from the screen, holding the tip of a pen between his teeth. It’s almost easier to talk without his direct attention.

“Not yet,” George says. “I don’t really know what to do about it.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t know.”

Sam hums. He sounds distracted. “Well, you need to make a decision soon. I need to finalise our

team for any matches, and I need to know if it'll be Dream playing, or Quackity."

Great. A deadline. George sighs. "Okay. I'll talk to him after practice."

"Thanks, George," Sam says. He looks up from his phone for a moment, nudging George's thigh with his knee. "You're a great captain, you know?"

"Sure," George says. "Thanks."

A great captain wouldn't take this long to make a decision on a brilliant new player, he thinks, but he doesn't say any of it. Quackity finally manages to hit Techno with one of the tennis balls. Eret starts clapping for him, and Techno falls to the ground like he's just been shot.

Sapnap emerges from the locker rooms, beelining towards them. Techno picks one of the tennis balls up and chuck's it at him, and it hits Sapnap in the stomach.

It makes George laugh, until Sapnap is followed by Dream.

He looks practically the same as last time, brown-blond hair and pond water eyes. He has a pimple on the tip of his nose, though, but the sun brings his freckles out enough that it's barely noticeable unless you look for it. George realises he's been looking for it, and immediately stops.

"Hey!" he calls. Sapnap reaches them and flops onto the ground. George kicks his foot out, connecting with Sapnap's thigh. "Took you long enough."

"This is abuse," Sapnap declares. No one deigns to respond.

Dream grins. He looks far too happy, George thinks. "Hey, everyone."

Sam nudges George. It's casual enough to look like an accident, but George knows what he means by it. He sighs, standing up.

"Dream? Can we talk real quick, please?"

George isn't expecting when Dream looks at him. "Of course. Now?"

"Yeah. Come with me."

He leads Dream across the pitch, several meters away from the rest of the group. They don't leave quick enough to avoid overhearing Sapnap say to Sam: "is he gonna do it?" George feels an embarrassment bubble in his stomach.

"So, what did you want to talk about?" Dream asks. He doesn't even sound bothered, like he knows there's no way George would deny him - or if he does, like he wouldn't care.

"I just wanted to give you an update on signing you," George says. "I guess you know that Phil and Sam are in favour of you, and most of the team probably is too. You're a great player, and you've adapted well to our play style."

"But?"

"But I'm apprehensive of signing a new player so soon," George finishes. "No matter how good you are, your skill isn't important to me. Your integrity and resilience is. The way you get along with the rest of the team is. Your morality is."

"Then I hope I can prove myself to you," Dream says. He sounds stupidly genuine. George hates it.

“You have a great team here. It’d be an honour to play with you all.”

“Flattery won’t get you anywhere.”

Dream laughs, almost. “Won’t it?”

“Not with me,” George says. “Listen. Stay for today’s practice, come for tomorrow’s. I’ll make my final decision then.”

“That sounds fair,” Dream says. “And George?”

“Hm?”

“Thanks for this opportunity,” he says. “Even if you don’t sign me, it’s still been great to meet you and your team.”

George doesn’t know what to say to that. “Right. Okay, well, we should get back to the team. They’ll be waiting for us.”

“So, did you have any more thoughts about signing Dream?” Sapnap asks once the session is over. George starts to return to the locker room.

Everyone’s left except for them. George shrugs. He kicks a half-deflated ball. “Not really.”

“Not really?”

“I guess I have to sign him, don’t I?”

Sapnap makes a funny sort of noise. “Well, you don’t have to. I just think he’d be a great asset to the team. And he’s pretty funny, you know. We would all get along.”

“I’m not signing him because you think he’s funny.”

“He’s a great player too. I’m just saying that he’d fit in with the group as well. Isn’t that what we want?”

George chews on his lip. “I guess. I’m just scared. You know I am.”

“Dream won’t be like that,” Sapnap says. “There’s no way. Besides, I’ve seen the way you look at him. You think he’s hot.”

“Sapnap!”

“Don’t even deny it.”

“I do not think he’s hot,” George says. “That’s false, not to mention incredibly inappropriate if we’re going to have a working relationship.”

“You so think he’s hot.”

“I don’t!”

“You totally do.”

“Shut up.”

“Only if you admit it.”

“There’s nothing to admit.”

Sapnap grins a shark tooth grin. “Dream and George, sittin’ in a tree-”

“Shut up.”

“K-I-S-S-I-N-G-”

“I am literally going to fire you.”

“First comes love, second comes marria-”

The door to the locker rooms swings open. George freezes like a deer in headlights, and Sapnap stops in the middle of a word. Dream stands in the doorway, looking almost like he’s just had a revelation.

“Am I interrupting?” he asks. He has the same shark-like grin that Sapnap does.

Sapnap, at least, looks vaguely nervous. “No. Did you not leave yet?”

“I forgot my bag,” Dream says. He indicates the backpack left on the bench. “I didn’t realise you two were still here.”

“We didn’t realise you were, either,” George says. “Obviously. Um.” Sapnap elbows him.

“I’ll just… grab this and go, then,” Dream says. He seems to be taking an extremely long time to collect his bag.

“Hey,” Sapnap says, “George and I were going to go out for drinks now-”

“No, we weren’t-”

“You could come if you like?”

Dream looks between them both, before finally smiling at Sapnap. “Sure. That’d be nice. Thanks.”

George realises there and then that he has no allies left.

He considers making a break for it when they get outside the pub. Sapnap seems to catch onto his plan a second before he enacts it, and he somehow manages to snag a hand around George’s wrist before he can take a step in the opposite direction.

“George.”

George glares at Sapnap. “What.”

His tone is vaguely disappointed. “Come on. We’re going out. It’ll be fun.”

“Right,” George says doubtfully. “You and I seem to have very different ideas of what fun is.”

“One drink,” Sapnap says, “just one. I’ll buy it. Then you can leave.”

“...Fine.”

Inside is a sticky sort of dark, like day old beer. It smells like ale and sweat and greasy pub food. George can feel his arteries clogging before they even sit down. When they do, the table is oily, like it hasn’t been cleaned properly in about thirty years. It probably hasn’t been. He tries not to think about it.

Sapnap beelines to the bar, leaving George to avoid Dream’s eye for as long as he can alone.

“This place is awful,” Dream says.

At least, George supposes, that’s something they can agree on. He grimaces, picking up the salt shaker from the middle of the table and grinding out a small pile onto the tabletop. He runs his finger through it, guiding the salt into a football shape.

Dream plucks one of the sugar packets up, tearing it and emptying the sugar onto the table before screwing the paper up into a ball. He flicks it directly into George’s salt pile.

“What the hell?”

Dream grins, “what?”

“Why did you just do that?”

Dream shrugs. “Dunno. Fun?”

George picks the paper ball up, leveling it at Dream before tossing it across the table. It hits him in the eye before dropping onto the floor. “Ow!”

“You deserved that,” George says petulantly.

“I can’t leave you guys alone for five seconds,” Sapnap says. He’s balancing three pints across his arms. George reaches out to take one from him, sliding it across the table to Dream. Sapnap places the other two in front of himself and George, before retaking his own seat and brushing their salt and sugar grains off the table.

“Sure you can,” Dream says. He drags his finger through the condensation on the side of his glass.

“You’re like children,” Sapnap accuses. “Are you sure you’re even old enough to drink?”

George grimaces. “Whatever. If anyone’s the child, you are.”

Sapnap kicks him beneath the table. When George jolts, the table wobbles, and a few drips of beer spill over the top of their glasses. “Sapnap! Look what you did.”

“You’re the most immature captain I’ve ever met,” Dream says. Sapnap bursts out laughing. No wonder he likes Dream, George thinks, they seem to run on the same wavelength.

“Fuck you,” George says. It probably proves Dream’s point exactly, but he turns his attention to the telly above the bar so he doesn’t have to respond.

It's playing a match rerun, one of the old UEFA Championships, one George doesn't remember seeing before. He watches tiny Barcelona and Chelsea players run up and down the pitch, barely three pixels big. One of them scores, but it's too far away to make out who it was.

"I remember this match," Dream says. It pulls George's attention back to the table. When he looks down in front of him, he sees Dream has torn open another sugar packet and pushed all of the granules into a lumpy circle in front of George's pint.

"Oh yeah?" Sapnap says. "It's UEFA, right?"

"Mhm. '09 semis. Barcelona went to the finals."

"How do you remember it?" George asks. He'd hated watching football as a kid, hated sitting and watching other people on the pitch when he could have been up there instead.

Dream shrugs. "My dad was into football. We'd sit and watch matches for hours. You know, he's why I started playing."

"That's cute," Sapnap says. "What does he think about our team?"

"Sapnap," George says. It's almost a warning, mostly exasperated.

"He thinks it's great," Dream says. He gets a wistful sort of smile on his face. "I told him I'd fly him out if we go to the leagues. He really wants to see me play."

"Hasn't he seen you play before?" George asks.

Dream shakes his head, "not for a while. He's never had a chance to come over, and I've never been part of a club for long enough."

"Why not? Anyone would be stupid to let you out of their club," Sapnap says, "you're almost as good as Techno, and no one is as good as Techno."

"Thanks," Dream says. He looks down at the table, a pale flush rising in his cheeks. In the low lighting, with the shadows across his face, the scar on his cheek looks a lot harsher.

George wants to reach out and touch it. He bites down hard on his lip, clenching his fists in his lap. That's stupid. That's rude and inappropriate. He doesn't like Dream; *he doesn't*.

The look Sapnap gives him is full of suspicion. George knows he'll bring it up on their run tomorrow, and he wonders if he'll be able to get out of it.

"So you came to our club instead?" he asks, before he can even think about the scar again.

Dream nods, "yeah. I've known Sam and Phil for a while. I used to play five-a-side with Phil years ago, before either of us got signed. I guess one thing led to another, and here I am."

"You've known Phil a while then?" Sapnap asks. "He's been signed with the team for almost as long as George has."

"A few years, sure," Dream says, "it'll be weird if we end up working together, though."

"Weird how?"

"Well, we've never played together in a professional capacity," Dream replies. He looks at George like he can see right through him, like he can sense every single one of George's doubts. "It'll be

something to adjust to. I've seen some of your matches, and playing with you at training is a lot to keep up with. You have a strong team, George."

"I know," George says. "Thanks."

"You kept up with us pretty well," Sapnap says. "Your tactical ability is off the charts, man. I might fall in love with you."

Dream laughs. His smile is pretty, George thinks, before he furiously tamps down on that thought before it can get out of hand. "You make some good plays too. If I didn't already have my eye on someone, I'd fall for you as well."

George doesn't say anything. Dream is looking right at him.

"He's totally in love with you," is how Sapnap greets George the next morning.

He hadn't come up with an excuse to beg off their run in time. Now he's forced to listen to Sapnap theorise on his lovelife in the drizzly cold. George wonders how much more of this he can take.

"He's totally not," he says in reply. Sapnap makes a doubtful face at him. "He is not!"

"Keep denying it," Sapnap says, like he's giving George permission. "Just know that when you don't sign Dream, and then you never see him again unless it's to play against him in the league, and you end up being alone for your entire life because you're so oblivious and emotionally stunted, that I get to say I told you so."

"No."

"I think that's more than fair."

"That is in no way fair!" George shakes his head at Sapnap. He's practically a lost cause. "You're such an idiot. Can we just run?"

Sapnap shrugs. He crouches down to tighten his sneaker laces, giving George ample time to start running. He starts jogging, and Sapnap manages to catch up almost immediately. He says, "you know Dream was flirting with you last night, right?"

"Don't even say that."

"He was!" Sapnap says, solemnly. "Would I ever lie to you?"

"Probably, yeah. You just want to watch me make a fool of myself," George says. He starts to pick up speed, one that Sapnap easily matches. "You probably all do. Silly old George, falling for the first guy that looks at him twice. This is bullshit. You're just trying to get my hopes up so I ask the hot new footballer out and then get my heart broken and made fun of for being so oblivious as to think that someone like *him* could ever fall in love with someone like *me*."

Sapnap seems to falter. Some icy part of George's heart relishes in it, in the awkwardness that festers. "I... That's not true, George."

"Whatever, Sapnap." His lungs burn.

“You’re more than enough for Dream. And I’m not trying to get your hopes up,” he says. “It sounds kinda like you’ve already got them up.”

“What *ever*, Sapnap.”

“But I’m serious. Dream seems like a great guy, and I’m ninety nine per cent sure that he’s looking at you the same way you look at him.”

“Sapnap.”

“And you’re even greater! He’d be so lucky to get with you, you know?”

“*Sapnap.*”

“You really are awesome. You’re my best friend, George, you know that-”

“Sapnap!”

Sapnap pauses. “Yeah?”

“Shut *up*,” George says. He feels tears prick in his eyes, wondering just when it got this far. He’s barely known Dream for a week, has had almost two conversations with him, and already he feels like a teenager with a stupid crush. He doesn’t even *like* Dream.

“Right,” Sapnap says. “Sorry.”

“I don’t have any feelings for Dream,” George says. “And even if I did, there’s no way he’d have them for me too. There’s just no chance. If I sign him, it’ll be because of his skill, not because of whatever fantasy you’ve dreamt up for us. Now, can we please just *run*.”

He doesn’t turn back to see Sapnap’s reaction. He doesn’t want to. George feels sort of like he’s trying more to convince himself than anyone else. It doesn’t bear thinking about, so he doesn’t.

He calls Phil.

“Thank God you answered,” George says. “I need your advice.”

“George? What’s wrong?”

“I don’t know what to do.”

Phil doesn’t say anything for a long, long minute. “What do you mean?”

“I don’t know what to do about Dream,” he says, “I feel so lost. I want to do what’s best for the team, I really do, but I don’t know if I can trust him with it.”

“You know Dream won’t be like that,” Phil says. His words are far more reassuring than Sam’s or Sapnap’s. “I’ve known him for a while, I would never recommend someone I couldn’t trust. And you know Sam would never accept someone like that again, not after what happened.”

“I know,” George sniffs. “I know that. I just... What if you’re wrong?”

“Dream is a great guy,” Phil says. “He’s a talented player, he knows tactics like the back of his hand. He’ll adapt easily to anything you throw at him, and he’ll fit in with the team like he was there all along. You’ve seen that, right?”

“Yeah.”

“So why do you think it’ll be like last time?”

George bites his tongue. “I don’t know. Schlatt ruined us, Phil. I don’t want Dream to do that either. I don’t think we’d be able to stand another storm like that.”

“Dream won’t be like that.”

“But what if he is?”

Phil exhales. It passes through the phone microphone like static. “He won’t. You know you’ll have to start trusting us again at some point, George. You might as well start now.”

“I’m just afraid.”

“I know,” Phil says. “I am too. But I trust Dream. And I trust you to make the right decision. For you, and for the team.”

“I hope so.”

“You will.”

“Thanks, Phil,” George says. He sighs. “Will you be at training tomorrow?”

“I’ll be there,” Phil says. “Just... don’t leave Dream hanging for too long, okay?”

“What do you mean?”

“Give him an answer. Don’t leave it until you regret it.”

George frowns, “I...”

“I have to go,” Phil says, “I’ll see you tomorrow, yeah?”

“Yeah,” George says. Phil hangs up before he can say anything else, and George listens to the dial tone until it runs out.

Then, he opens up Dream’s contact, staring at their blank message board. Don’t leave it too long. And Sam will need an answer soon, too.

GEORGE: I’ll sign you. You’re on the team.

we've gone too far

Chapter Summary

sleepovers, football, and film snob sapnap

Chapter Notes

id like to reiterate how little i know about football. take everything with a whole handful of salt and youll be golden. also, team names/player names are mostly bullshitted too - they have no meaning except for trying to keep everything in world. finally: any links included are safe, and i recommend clicking on them.

chapter title from [video killed the radiostar](#)

enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George arrives at the club early. Not even Sam is there yet, so he changes into his kit and spends a few minutes pulling out the footballs and a set of worn-out cones from the equipment cupboard.

He's alone until Dream walks out of the locker room, holding a water bottle and a hoodie. "Hey, George!"

"Dream," George replies. He didn't expect to be alone with him until later, not until after practice. He'd even take Sapnap as a buffer at this point.

"You know, I got your message the other night," Dream says. The corridor leading out to the pitch has never seemed so small. "I was hoping I'd catch you alone, actually. I just wanted to say thank you. I really appreciate this."

George presses his lips together into an almost smile. "It's no problem. You're a great player. It'd be great to have you on our team."

"It's great to be there. You have so many strong players." George pulls a net bag out of the closet, dislodging a carefully balanced stack of traffic cones. They begin to tumble down until Dream manages to catch them with one hand. "Woah! Careful there."

George tightens his grip on the net. "Yeah. Thanks. I should go set up now."

"Here, let me take one of those," Dream offers. He doesn't wait for an answer before taking both of the football bags from George, leaving him with only the stack of cones. He starts towards the pitch, and it's all George can do to chase after him.

"I could have taken one."

Dream shrugs, dumping them down by the bench. "It's no trouble. Do you want help setting up,

too?"

"...Sure. Thanks."

Dream grins. The scar at the corner of his lip warps. George feels irrevocably annoyed by it. He picks up the stack of cones, splitting them in half and giving Dream one pile. "Where do you want these?"

"Put them in a circle. We're just gonna do drills today," George says.

"No games?"

He shakes his head, "I already have an idea of how everyone plays together. Now I want to see individual skill. And it doesn't hurt to stay in practice."

"That's a good idea," Dream says. He starts to place the cones. "Hey, can I ask you something?"

"Depends what it is."

"Did you always want to captain a football team?" is what Dream says. It isn't exactly what George had been expecting, and the question throws him for a moment.

"I... I guess not," he answers eventually. "I just wanted to play football, mostly. I found the club, Sam met me, and slowly we started building up the team. I guess I was just the first choice for captain."

"Would you give it up?"

"Why?"

Dream shrugs. "I'm just curious. It must be pretty stressful."

"I guess so. It's not half as stressful as Sam's job; I just have to make sure the team works well together. He handles everything else," George replies. "I couldn't do what he does, that's for sure."

"I couldn't either," Dream says, "But I don't think I could do yours either. It seems like it could be a lot of pressure. Especially if the team doesn't get along."

The way he says it has George's hackles rising. He wonders if someone's told Dream about Schlatt yet. "I guess," he says shortly. "The rest of the team will be here soon. You can start warming up, if you want."

Dream, thankfully, seems to recognise the rejection for what it is, and offers him an easy smile. He returns the few cones he still has, before heading back to where he had dumped his hoodie and water next to the spare equipment.

George finishes setting up some of the cones, and adamantly does not look at Dream when he begins his stretches.

Wilbur, Phil, and Techno arrive together. George smiles at them from across the pitch, heading over to greet them.

"Are we doing drills today?" Wilbur asks, almost sounding disappointed.

George nods. "Yeah. Maybe we could play a five-a-side before practice ends. I just want to make sure you're all up to scratch. Especially Dream."

“Why?” Techno says, looking up from where he’s adjusting his socks. “Did you finally sign him?”

“What do you mean, finally?” George asks. He kicks a stray ball with the back of his heel, sending it back towards where the cones are set up.

“We’ve all been waiting at least three days for your final decision,” Wilbur says. “And we know you’ve been speaking to Phil and Sapnap about it, but they won’t tell us anything.”

When George looks over at him, Phil just smiles serenely. He looks exhausted these days, and George thinks maybe taking time off the team will be good for him. “I’ll tell you when everyone gets here.”

Techno groans, thumping his forehead into Wilbur’s shoulder. “We’re supposed to be a team,” he drawls, like George needs reminding of it.

“We are a team,” George says. “Which is why I’m waiting for everyone else to arrive.”

“They’re always late,” Wilbur reminds him.

“Not always,” George says. “Besides, you can be just as late sometimes.”

“Those in glass houses,” Phil agrees.

It doesn’t take long for the rest of the team to arrive, all of them congregating around the bench. George stands, drawing everyone’s attention.

“Okay!” he calls, “we’ll get started soon, but I just wanted to let you all know that Dream is officially part of our team and will be replacing Phil on field for the time being.”

Bad whoops. It makes Dream smile, and blush sort of high on his cheek bones.

“Sounds good, team,” Sam says. “I’ve also had some news regarding the league this year. It’s nearly in season, and we’ve been invited back. We’ll be teaming with a couple other clubs in the next few months for training. I want to see good sportsmanship all round while we practice, and even more so once we’re actually in the league. Alright?”

George nods at him. “Sounds great. Thanks, Sam. So, for practice today, I just wanted to do some basic drills. We’ve done minigames the past few days, and now I want to see how everyone is on tactics. If we’re in the league, we’re gonna be going over formation and everything in the next few weeks. Maybe we’ll shift some things about.” He starts unloading one of the football bags, rolling a ball over to each player. “Everyone ready? We’ll start with some basic passes...”

He manages to catch Sam after practice, in between putting all the equipment away and changing out of his kit.

“Hey, Sam.”

He’s thoroughly absorbed by something in his phone, but looks up for a moment. It’s the best George could have hoped for. “Hey, George. Good practice.”

“I thought so. Do you have a moment right now?”

“Sure,” Sam says. He sounds distracted still, but it only lasts a minute before he switches off his phone. George starts back towards the locker room, expecting Sam to follow. “What’s up?”

“I just wanted to talk to you about Dream,” George says. “If we’re going to the league, I want your opinion on how we should edit our field, if we need to. Dream’s such a strong player, I think he’d do great in any position, but I want to make sure it’s cohesive with the rest of the team.”

“Like you say, Dream’ll thrive wherever he plays,” Sam says. “But you’re right; you don’t want him to overshadow anyone else. You’re gonna stay in centre, right?”

“Yeah. I want Dream or Techno in centre too, I think,” George says. “They’ll be the best for offense.”

“How about you and Dream in centre mid; Techno, Sapnap, and Bad in midfield; have Eret and Punz defending, and Fundy and Skeppy on the wings. Quackity, Callahan and Phil on bench.”

“That could work,” George says. “I don’t know. Bad is better for defense. I’d put Bad in place of Punz.”

“Or you could have you, Sap, and Dream in centre,” Sam suggests. “Put Techno and Punz on attack. Fundy, Bad, and Wilbur can defend, and put Eret and Skeppy on the wings.”

“Maybe. We’ll have to see,” George says. “Which clubs are going to train with us? We can try the formations out then.”

“I’m waiting for confirmation from a couple, but I’ll let you know,” Sam says. “I copied Dream into the team mailing list and the groupchat, by the way. We’ll have to catch a movie with everyone at some point.”

“Sounds good.”

“I’ll leave you to it, then,” Sam says. He pauses just outside the locker room door. “Don’t push yourself too hard, George.”

“You too,” George says. Sam offers him a small smile before turning down the corridor towards the main building of the club. He pulls his phone out of his pocket before he’s even a foot away.

Sapnap doesn’t turn up to their run the next day. George, for however glad he is for the peace and quiet, finds himself missing the company. It’s almost embarrassing. He has to resist texting Sapnap to ask where he is.

He ends up leaving halfway through. It just isn’t the same without him.

To make up for it, supposedly, Sapnap turns up on his doorstep that evening with a bouquet of flowers in his hand and a stupid grin on his face.

“What the hell are you doing here?”

“I wanted to see you,” Sapnap says, like that’s obvious. “I bought you flowers and everything to apologise for not running this morning.”

George takes the flowers gingerly. For all he knows, they might be laced with poison. “I don’t care. I’m glad you weren’t there.”

“I bet you missed me, secretly,” Sapnap says, letting himself into George’s house. “You’re a huge teddy bear under the cast iron exterior, I know it.”

“Keep telling yourself that,” George says. Sapnap walks around his house like he owns it, so George leaves him in the living room to put the flowers in a vase of water.

“Hey, where did you get this?” Sapnap calls. George looks up, staring at his own reflection in the kitchen window and wondering what he did to deserve this.

Sapnap appears in the doorway holding a small photo frame. George frowns at it. “What do you mean, where did I get it?”

“I’ve never seen this photo before,” Sapnap says, “and you’re not the nostalgic type. Since when did you have a selfie of me and you on display?”

George shrugs. “I don’t know. It’s just a stupid picture. Who cares?”

“I care.”

“Put it back then.”

“I just wanna know why you have it,” Sapnap says. “I’ve never seen you display a photo of us before. Who are you, and what have you done with George?”

“Shut up.”

“Is Dream making you soft?” Sapnap asks. “Oh, my God, did you fall in love and suddenly become gross and nostalgic?”

“Sapnap, seriously?”

“I’m just saying. You’re a changed man, George. Love has weakened you.”

“I’m not in love.”

“Aren’t you?”

George bites the inside of his cheek. He can’t answer that. Sapnap’s pointed look is more than enough.

“Shut up,” he says instead. “Are you staying for dinner or what?”

“If you buy,” Sapnap says. He puts the picture frame down on the kitchen counter like he never even saw it in the first place and returns to the living room.

George puts the vase of flowers next to it, lingering for a moment. It’s a photo of him and Sapnap from several years ago, on the evening that Sapnap got signed to the club. They both have wide grins and young eyes. Even though things are different now, they’re still the same. It’s a relief to

know that at least Sapnap won't change, no matter what happens.

Sapnap is flicking through Netflix when George enters the living room. "What are you doing?"

He looks up like a kid caught with his hands in the cookie jar. "Looking for a movie. Why? You wanna watch?"

George shrugs. "If you put on something good, sure."

"What's something good?"

George moves around the couch, parking himself in the corner. "I dunno. Something not bad, like you normally watch."

"My taste in film is *not* bad," Sapnap defends. George makes a non-committal hum, waiting for Sapnap to launch into his spiel. "Just because you don't know how to appreciate true art, doesn't mean we're all degenerates."

"Mhm."

"Film is more than blockbuster action," Sapnap continues, thoroughly distracted. George uses the opportunity to snatch the remote back from him. "Your brain is just so heartbreakingly small and pea sized that you don't know how to properly consume genuine ingenuity. But that's okay, George, because we can't all be smart like I am."

"Mhm."

"One day, you will be well versed in the art of film. But for now, I suppose I could deign to watch your crappy mainstream movies."

The MARVEL jingle starts to play. Sapnap looks utterly offended, like he hadn't even realised that George had taken the remote from him. "Whatever you say, Sapass," George says. He settles in to watch a couple hours of actors fighting one another, hoping against all hopes that Sapnap will stay quiet throughout it.

It's a fool's errand, George knows, when Sapnap gets up the first time to go piss. He has an uncanny ability to move during all of the important plot moments, and makes an effort to make as much noise as he physically can until George has missed at least a minute of important dialogue. After the second, third, and fourth times, George gives in reluctantly and flicks subtitles on.

Then, Sapnap gets up to order pizza. He makes it a point to stand directly in front of the screen and talk as loudly as he can. George chucks a throw pillow at him, but it does nothing. If anything, it stokes the flames of Sapnap's stubbornness.

"You are so annoying."

Sapnap makes kissy faces at him, pointing at the phone and then shushing him.

George sticks his tongue out, raising his voice slightly. "You're a bitch, Sapnap."

Sapnap sticks his middle finger up. George glares at him. He tosses the last throw pillow. It falls just short, and Sapnap makes a physical effort to swallow his laughter.

"You're such an idiot," George says. He stands up from the couch. Sapnap seems to assume this is George giving up, until he starts heaving the couch cushions up and chucking one of those in

Sapnap's direction.

It breaks him, at least, causing him to yelp and jump out of the way. George settles back into the couch, minus several cushions, to finish the movie. The discomfort is worth it.

Until it turns out that Sapnap only ordered pizza for himself.

“What the fuck.”

“You didn’t tell me what you wanted,” Sapnap says with his mouthful of Texas Barbeque.

“You didn’t even ask me what I wanted.”

Sapnap shrugs, “that’s not my problem, is it?”

George glares at him. “You are the worst best friend I have ever had. And I mean that.”

“I know you do. You still don’t have pizza, though, do you?”

It takes barely two seconds of thinking for George to launch himself over the couch towards Sapnap, managing to snatch two slices from the box before Sapnap can stop him. When he sits back on his side of the sofa, satisfied with his loot, Sapnap looks like he just killed a baby rabbit in front of him.

“What was that for?”

George takes a bite from one of the slices. He doesn’t even like Texas Barbeque. “I was hungry.”

“You don’t like Texas Barbeque.”

“I guess I do now,” he says, making a big deal of swallowing.

“Do you?” Sapnap asks. George nods. “You can have another slice then.”

He looks between the two he has and the box on Sapnap’s lap, wondering if it’s really worth it now.

Sapnap bursts out laughing. He holds the box out for George to replace the two slices he took. George does so gladly, wrinkling his nose. “I guess you don’t like it anymore?”

“That was the worst thing I have ever had the misfortune of eating,” George says, solemnly. It only serves to make Sapnap laugh harder.

It ends up like a sleepover, like when they were kids. Sapnap doesn’t protest when George puts another action movie on, nor when George takes one of the leftover pizza slices and starts picking all of the toppings off of it.

He’s half expecting Sapnap to bring up the stupid games they used to play, like truth or dare, or twenty one questions, even though they already knew everything about one another. Maybe he’ll take the remote back and put on a ‘top ten goals of all time’ compilation.

Slowly, the moon begins to rise higher. It blankets the streets outside with a dull sort of nothingness. Sapnap's voice starts to get quieter, like they have to whisper. George pulls a blanket up to his chin like he can hide beneath it.

He asks, "what do you really think about Dream?" He knows Sapnap will be honest now, that the weight of the sky will force genuinity out of him.

"What do you mean?" Sapnap says. He speaks so lowly that George almost can't hear him, like he's afraid someone will overhear, like the universe will take his words and repossess them into something they never were.

"As a person," George clarifies. "What do you think?"

Sapnap is quiet for a long time. So long that George begins to wonder if he fell asleep. "I think he's great. He's the best person we could have signed."

"Not just because of football?"

"No," Sapnap agrees. "Not just because of football." He waits a further minute to continue speaking. When he does, it's tentative, like he isn't sure how the words fit in his mouth. "You really do love him, don't you?"

George chews his tongue. "I... I don't know. I don't know how. I barely know him. I really thought I hated him."

"You hate him because you love him."

He scoffs, but the walls he employs are weakening. "That doesn't even make sense."

Sapnap ignores him. "You hate him because you're afraid. You're afraid of what might happen with the team, if he'll turn out to be like last time. You hate him because he's making you feel something, things that you've tried not to feel for a long time, and you don't know how to act on it. When was the last time you had a boyfriend, George? When was the last time you had more company than your right goddamn hand?"

He can't reply. Sapnap is right. Of course he's right; he seems to know George like the back of his hand. If he could, George knows he'd fall in love with Dream for him.

"See?" Sapnap says gently. "How could you ever hate him?"

George feels tears stick in the back of his throat, "I don't know what to do."

"Whatever feels right," Sapnap says. "You don't have to do anything."

"I don't want this to mess things up for us at the league."

"You won't mess anything up," Sapnap says, and it sounds like a promise. "We'll have the strongest team in the league. We have the strongest players now. We'll do great there. And after, you can do whatever you want about Dream. Hell, you can fire him and never see him again if you want."

"Thanks, Sap," he says. "I mean that."

"I know you do."

They don't need to say anything else. When George falls asleep that night, to the blue standby on

the telly and Sapnap's low breathing, he sleeps better than he has in a while. Finally, he sees hope at the end of the tunnel.

The next morning, Sapnap leaves before George even wakes up. In his wake is a trail of leftover pizza and flower petals, like his own personal treasure hunt. George ignores it until the pizza starts to smell.

Wilbur invites him out to the park. Whenever Wilbur is concerned, Techno and Phil tend to come as a package deal, so George dresses quickly and leaves to go meet them. He needs to see someone who isn't Sapnap or Dream, and do something that isn't sit on his couch and stress.

It's a nice day - objectively. The sun is just about shining, and it's not raining. It means there'll probably be kids playing makeshift footie games. George hopes it'll give him something to focus on that isn't his own team.

The three of them have already commandeered a generous patch of grass when George arrives. Phil offers him a smile as he approaches, but Wilbur and Techno seem thoroughly absorbed in throwing Techno's phone back and forth to one another.

George settles on the grass, as far as he can get from Wilbur and Techno. Phil leans back on his hands, tipping his face up to the halfhearted sun. He doesn't look as tired today; which, George supposes, doesn't mean much, since Phil's exhaustion seems to have seeped into his very bones and is becoming very stubborn about leaving.

"Morning, George," Phil says. He seems as adamant about ignoring Wilbur and Techno as George is.

"Hey. You look tired today."

Phil makes a noise. It could almost be agreeable. "The baby seems to be having trouble sleeping. Doesn't bode well for when they're actually born, right?"

George hums. "Maybe they'll get all their restless energy out now, and then you'll have them sleeping through the night immediately."

"God, I hope so," Phil says. Wilbur woos, drawing their attention. He seems to have managed to toss Techno's phone far enough that Techno couldn't catch it.

George watches Techno glare at Wilbur. "Are you sure that's a good idea to be doing that?" he asks, almost doubtfully.

"It's fine," Wilbur says quickly. "Techno doesn't mind."

"Doesn't he?" Phil says. "He looks kind of like he minds." They all turn to Techno, who is stalking back to their patch after retrieving his phone from wherever Wilbur threw it. He looks definitely mad. George supposes this is what makes him such a good player.

"It'll be fine," Wilbur says. George hears the beginnings of doubt thread through his voice. "Techno wouldn't hurt me," he says, but he looks like he hardly believes it.

Techno stands in front of him. From the ground, he cuts an imposing figure, backlit by the midmorning sun. “I am going to *obliterate* you at the next training session.”

“Techno,” Phil says.

It’s enough to make Techno sit back down. George marvels at the sheer power Phil wields. “If you had broken my phone,” Techno says, “you would be paying for it. I’d make sure George took it out of your paycheque.”

“Hey,” George says, holding his hands up in some sort of surrender. “I’m not involved in this. It’s not on company time or property either, you can’t make me do anything.”

“Oh, can’t I?”

When Techno turns his glare on him, George thinks even a greater man would submit.

“Down, boy,” Phil says. It’s warning enough that Techno relaxes just slightly. Wilbur does too, exhaling heavily and offering Techno a sheepish sort of grin. George thinks Phil will be a great parent.

“Sam put us in for the league, right?” Wilbur asks. He runs his fingers through the grass to his left, plucking up stray blades and tearing them to pieces.

“He did,” George says, “we’ll be working more on tactics and gameplay soon.”

Techno hums, “Dream will be good at that.”

“You think so?”

“He’s clearly a tactical player,” Techno elaborates. “He seems like he knows what’s happening on the pitch before it even happens. He’ll be a strong player in any position.”

“That’s what I thought,” George says. “I was talking to Sam about it the other day. I kind of want to shuffle the pitch formations around a bit, if we have him. It’s a new variable. He gives us a different strength.”

“What are you thinking?” Phil asks.

George shrugs, “I still haven’t decided. I want to try a few things out. But we have four strong offensive players. That will be helpful. Sam suggested putting me, Dream, and Sapnap in centre mid.”

“That would be strong,” Wilbur says, “You, Techno, Dream, and Sapnap would be great in mid.”

“That’s what I said. I might put Techno with Dream,” George says, “I don’t know yet. We’ll see. If Sam gets confirmation from a few clubs, we’ll play friendlies with them and practice some of these.”

“Dream played centre in the five-a-sides, right?” Phil says, “he’s always played that position. He’ll be good there. I think you and him could be a strong duo on the pitch.”

“He’d play well with anyone,” says Techno.

“Of course he would,” Phil says, “but he’d be especially strong with you, George. You’d balance each other’s play styles out.”

“You think so?”

Phil nods, “I do. Dream has an offensive style, you have a defensive one. You’re both attackers, sure, but if Dream was dribbling down to the goal, you’d be around to defend him. If you were, he’d be there to protect the ball.”

George frowns. It almost makes sense. “I thought Sapnap did that.”

Techno scoffs, “no. Sapnap is just a loose cannon. He’ll do whatever he thinks will win the match.”

“Usually it does win us the match,” George says, almost defensive. “He has some method to his madness, you know.”

“I didn’t say he didn’t,” Techno says, “just that, if you’re defensive, and Dream’s offensive, Sapnap swings wildly between the two.”

“It’s like a match made in heaven, then,” Wilbur says, “the three of you will balance each other out perfectly. I bet if the three of you were in centre mid, the other team wouldn’t even get a look in on the ball.”

George laughs. “We can only hope. I still have to finalise that decision. Maybe when we test run it, I’ll realise that Dream and Sapnap are completely incompatible to play together and regret signing Dream on altogether.”

“I don’t think you’ll have that trouble,” Wilbur says. “Have you seen how chummy Sapnap and Dream have got? If I didn’t know better, I’d think they were dating.”

Techno kicks Wilbur in the shin with a pointed look. George pretends he doesn’t see it.

He grimaces. “Don’t remind me. It’s sickening.”

“At least they get along,” Phil placates.

“Right as always, Phil,” Techno says, “but it would certainly make it interesting on the field, if they did hate each other after all.”

“Interesting?” George repeats. “That’s one word for it. Dream would make one mistake and Sapnap would end him.”

“Or the other way around,” Wilbur says, “Dream can definitely hold his own. Especially if it’s against Sapnap.”

George looks doubtful. “Against Sapnap? Are you sure? He’s like an angry badger when you get him started.”

“It helps him on the pitch, that’s for sure,” Phil says. “I can’t wait to see the first time Dream has to stand up to Sapnap.”

“Dream would win,” Techno says, confidently.

“It doesn’t matter who would win,” Wilbur says, “it would just be great to watch.”

“As long as they don’t do it before the league matches, I don’t care,” George says. “Sam would put a stop to any rivalry if it gets in the way of the league.”

“I don’t think Sapnap would let it get that far,” Phil says, “especially not before the league. He’s got his heart set on winning, doesn’t he?”

“He always does,” George says, with the sort of long suffering exhaustion of someone who has been subject to weathering the highs and lows of Sapnap’s moods for his entire life. “He’ll get over it.”

The rest of the week passes uneventfully: Sapnap joins George on all of his runs and manages to talk enough to wear his throat out. Techno and Dream are the first to have a standoff on the pitch (which ends up surprising just about no one), after Techno steals a goal from under Dream’s feet. Phil had had to mediate, since George hadn’t dared get in between the two of them (which Sapnap had dutifully made fun of him for later).

He and Sam had sat down over beers and started redrafting the team tactics for the upcoming league, too. It had been less productive than George had hoped for, a fact he is adamantly blaming on the alcohol. Sapnap lets him complain about it the following morning before offering some surprisingly sound suggestions, and George had been able to spend his day off actually relaxing.

It means he arrives at the club on Monday morning feeling almost unstoppable and completely untouchable. It’s a welcome change, and one that couldn’t have come soon enough.

Sam is already there, standing by the locker room and balancing his laptop against his arm, typing on it with one hand. George asks, “what are you doing here?” He hadn’t expected to see Sam this early, let alone at all today.

“One of the clubs I contacted will be coming today,” Sam says, “El Rapids? We can test some new formations on them.”

“El Rapids?” George repeats, “are they going to the leagues, too?”

Sam shrugs, “not sure yet. Most teams will apply on the off chance they get chosen for the qualifiers.”

“Do we have a date for the qualifiers yet?”

“No, but we will soon,” Sam says, “you’ll be the first to know as soon as I do. My best guess is we’ll find out in the next couple of weeks.”

“A couple weeks?” George grimaces. “That’s ages, isn’t it? I thought we’d at least have a tentative date by now.”

“Me too,” Sam says. He taps a final rhythm out on his keyboard before closing the lid of the laptop and turning to face George properly. “I’m sure it’s fine; they’ve probably just run into administrative trouble. Speaking of, I wanted to talk to you about the team.”

George frowns. “What about them?”

“About Techno and Dream the other day?” Sam makes a face, “I don’t like the way what happened, happened. I was wondering if you’d talk to them about it.”

“Sure. I don’t really know what to say to them, though,” George says. He hadn’t liked their stand-off either, but it hadn’t seemed like that big of an issue. Just something that would happen as tensions rose towards the league, and Dream started settling into their team dynamic.

“I want to make sure they’re on good terms,” Sam explains, “they’re two of our strongest players: I’d rather they stay on each other’s good sides while we’re approaching the league. I don’t want on-pitch rivalries.”

“I guess,” George says. “I’ll bring it up today. Are you staying for practice?”

Sam shakes his head. “No. I only wanted to run into you today. Email me how it goes later?”

“Of course.”

“Thanks, George,” Sam says. He offers him a smile. “Have a good session, then. I’ll see you tomorrow, and I’ll keep you updated if I hear anything about the qualifiers or the league.”

“Thanks,” George echoes. Sam starts heading back into the heart of the club, away from the pitch, and George heads into the locker room.

He dumps his back and jacket on one of the pegs, flicking the light switch on. No one’s been in yet, and the air is sort of dry and musty after sitting all night. He pulls his hoodie off, changing it out for the kit shirt, and folds it into his duffel. There’s a spare pair of trainers shoved under the bench. They look like Punz’s.

No one else enters until he’s sitting down to put on the shin pads and socks. He looks up to see Eret and Quackity enter together.

“Oh- hey, George,” Eret says, sounding sort of surprised. “I didn’t expect to see you here this early.”

“I could say the same to you,” George says. He rolls the top of the sock over his knee, straightening it out before folding it back down. “Why are you so early?”

“We were just gonna come and warm up,” Quackity says. “We saw Sam on the way in, did he just leave?”

“Yeah. He said that a club is gonna come and play friendlies today to practice for the league,” George says, “I’m hoping to use it as a chance to try out some new formations before we finalise them.”

“That sounds good,” Eret says. They dump their bag on the bench a few pegs down from George. “What sort of formations?”

George pulls his boots out of his bag. “Sam and I were talking about it. Since Dream joined, I want to try some new positions to see where he’ll play best. Solo and with the team.”

“He’ll be a good centre-mid,” Quackity says, “he’s kinda scary on the pitch.”

George laughs. “He’s intimidating, sure. Hopefully we can work that to our advantage.”

“We have Techno, Dream, Sapnap, and you, George,” Eret says. “I think any team that plays against us would be stupid not to be intimidated.”

“True,” Quackity agrees, “we have the leagues in the bag no matter what position everyone plays.”

“I hope so,” George says. He leans down to tie the laces on his boots, pulling them tight and double knotting. “You two are good players too. I just hope we can all play cohesively as a team.”

“We do pretty well on fives,” Eret says. “I think it’ll be fine, George. For as long as you’re our captain, our team will be the strongest at the table.”

George scoffs, “that’s a lot to live up to. But thanks. I’m glad you think so. I guess all we have to do now is actually win the league.”

El Rapids is a good team, George realises. His team is waiting by the sidelines (he’s deliberately not looking at Dream, who’s warming up and stretching. Sapnap keeps looking at him, then at Dream, and then giggling). El Rapids are talking amongst themselves. Their players keep giving George glares. It makes him feel like a child on a playground again.

He bites his tongue. Bad sneaks up behind him.

“They’re being pretty childish, huh?” he says, nudging his elbow into George’s shoulder.

“Nothing I can’t deal with,” George says, “I captain a team with Sapnap in, after all.”

“It’s a shame Sam isn’t here. He wouldn’t let them get away with it, even if this isn’t an official match,” Bad says. “You should stand up for yourself.”

“It’s fine.”

“It’s poor sportsmanship,” Bad says, “if they do this off pitch, think about how bad it’ll be during the match.”

George sighs. “It’s not worth it. We’ll win, anyway. And Niki is a good ref - she won’t let them get away with anything.”

“It’s a bad look for their team, but if you’re sure,” Bad says.

“I’m sure.”

“And you have a whole team of people behind you if you do wanna call them out,” Bad reminds him, with a small sort of smile. “Don’t forget that. It’s rude of them, especially since they’re the guests here.”

“It’s just friendlies,” George says, “it doesn’t bother me. But thank you, Bad. Are you ready to play?”

Bad nods, “yep! I think everyone’s finished warming up, too.”

“Alright. I’ll go talk to their captain, and we’ll start soon, then,” George says. Bad gives him a grin and a sympathetic look, and George lets it fuel him across the pitch, towards El Rapids.

Their captain cuts an imposing figure. He turns around when George approaches, offering him a professional smile. “Hi. George, right?”

“Right. Welcome to the FC.”

“Thanks. I’m Spifey. Is your team ready?”

George nods. “Is yours?”

Spifey nods. “Yep. Give it five minutes and then we’ll start?”

“That sounds good,” George says, “I’ll go let Niki know. Good luck.”

“You, too.”

The smile he gets on the way back is decidedly more poisonous. George feels it poke into his back like spikes. He catches Niki’s attention, tapping his wrist for watch and then holding up five fingers. She sends him a thumbs up.

He returns to his team. They gravitate towards him, forming a lumpy sort of circle.

“We start in five minutes,” George says. “Dream, Sap, and I will be centre mid. Fundy and Wilbur on the wings. Skeppy, Bad, and Eret on centre back. Techno and Punz on centre forward. Sound good?”

“Aye, aye, Captain,” Skeppy says. He sticks his hand in the middle of the circle, prompting everyone else to put theirs atop his.

George waits till the end to add his to the pile. Dream’s hand is beneath his. “On three,” Skeppy instructs. “One, two, three- TEAM!”

It makes George grin. Bad laughs, Techno makes a face like he hates being seen with them. Dream doesn’t take his eyes off of George, and he feels it burn.

“Let’s go, then,” George says. He leads the team towards the centre circle, where Niki and Spifey’s team wait for them.

They line up, shake hands, and then Niki steps back. George takes his place on the right side of the centre circle. Sapnap stands opposite him, and Dream in the middle. Caught up in the game, he sends them both a smile and doesn’t look away.

El Rapids kick off. They pass the ball once, twice, thrice, before Techno tackles a guy with long brown hair. He skids to the astro, and Techno has possession.

He dribbles it back down pitch. George sees Punz shadowing him, waiting for Techno to kick back. Skeppy stays forward, waiting for Techno to pass. He does, kicking to Skeppy, who passes it immediately away to Dream.

Dream volleys it to Sapnap, who dribbles three yards down pitch before passing it back. They kick it between each other down the pitch, always just one step ahead of El Rapids. Just the way George likes it.

Fundy gets in position to shoot. Dream passes to Sapnap for the final time, who flicks the ball up, up, up. Fundy leaps up, headers the ball, and misses by barely an inch.

“Dammit,” George hears him curse, before the El Rapids goalie is retrieving the ball and kicking it back into play again.

“Better luck!” Sapnap calls out to Fundy as they run back up field.

El Rapids have the ball and seem intent on keeping it that way. Punz attempts a tackle, but they

pass the ball away before he can. Thankfully, Wilbur manages to intercept, kicking back to Bad. Bad passes to Eret, who hooks his foot under the ball and drags it upwards. The ball flies across half the pitch, and Techno catches it, bouncing it off his chest and onto the astro.

He passes it, and George receives. He dribbles it past the centre circle, makes sure Dream and Sap are tailing him (they are), before passing it to Dream.

Dream dribbles it halfway to the penalty box before shooting. George feels his heart leap into his throat. They score the first goal of the game.

Sapnap whoops, throwing himself onto Dream's back. Skeppy and Bad run forward too, hooking arms and hands and wide, wide grins around Dream. George stays back, letting confidence fester in his chest. It almost overpowers the nerves.

Niki blows her whistle. El Rapids goalie throws the ball back into play, and the game continues.

El Rapids score their first goal around the forty two minute mark. George claps for them, offering Spifey a congratulatory smile. He'd seen it happen, seen how their left-wing player had sent it in at nearly a forty degree angle.

During half time, Sapnap jumps onto Dream's back again. They parade around the locker room, bumping into pegs and bags and Techno, who glares until they stop.

Sapnap kicks off after half time. The rest of the game is spent volleying the ball between teams, chasing each other up and down the pitch.

Until George gets the ball. He dribbles it towards the goal, followed by Dream and Sapnap. He's so close, close enough, until one of the El Rapids players tries to tackle him. He kicks the ball to the right, and hopes someone will catch it.

Someone does, and he turns just in time to see [Dream leap up, twist his body, kick his leg out, and score.](#)

A hush falls over the pitch in the liminal time between Dream's foot connecting with the ball, and the ball connecting with the net. George inhales, holds his breath. Exhales.

There's silence. Dream falls onto his back on the pitch. Niki blows her whistle. The game is over.

They won. Barely a minute left on the clock and they won.

Dream is still lying there. George can see his chest heave, even after Sapnap launches himself at him. They lie there together, until Skeppy joins, and then Fundy, Bad, and Wilbur. Techno stays far, far away, and Ant stays in the penalty box, but George can see them grinning.

It's not an official match, but the relief of winning is still satisfying. George finds himself pulled down to join their celebratory pile, and he lies there for an eternity, inhaling heavily and exhaling relief.

He catches up to Techno in the locker room. Techno is half way through pulling a sweater over his head, and George waits for him to finish.

“Hey, can I check in with you quickly?” George asks, He sits on the bench next to Techno and starts unlacing his boots.

“Sure,” Techno says. He sounds possibly confused. “What about?”

“About Dream,” George says. “I just want to make sure everything’s good between you two. You know, we can’t really afford any rivalries at the league. We’re all playing on the same side, right?”

Techno looks sort of surprised. “Right. Everything’s fine between us. We’ll be able to play.”

“Good. I just don’t want any tension on my team,” George says. “You’ll tell me if either of you have a problem, right?”

“Of course.”

“Great.” Even if George hadn’t been entirely worried, something in him settles at Techno’s agreement. “Then there’s no issue. Thanks, Techno. And you played well today.”

Techno offers him a small smile. “You did too. That was a great assist at the end of the match.”

“Thanks,” George smiles back. “I’ll let you finish getting changed. Get some rest this evening, okay? I’ll expect you all here tomorrow afternoon.”

“Yes, captain,” Techno says. It’s almost teasing, but just sincere enough to not be. George just rolls his eyes at him, returning to his original peg in the locker room. There are bigger battles to fight, sometimes.

George: We won the match 2-1 against El Rapids. Putting Dream in the centre circle with me and Sap was a good play.

Sam: That's great! Who scored the goals?

George: Dream got them both. Scored the winning goal about a minute before the end of the game. Should have filmed it.

Sam: He's a strong player, we already knew that. Tell me all about it tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

how do we feel about that goal then? i love it. i think its really important to show dream & georges developing trust - on and off pitch! and its a great goal, too.

feel free to comment some thoughts. i really appreciate all of them so far! ive put so much work into this, so its really great to hear how people are enjoying it.

thank you for reading! i couldnt ever say thank you enough <3

let her dance with me just for the hell of it

Chapter Summary

driving, darkness, dream; the aftermath.

Chapter Notes

hello! as always, read, enjoy, maybe leave a comment, remember that any links are worth clicking on. thank u!

chapter title from [where is my mind](#) by the pixies.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“That was a good match yesterday,” Sapnap says the next morning. He looks barely exhausted. George, on the other hand, feels positively drained. He hadn’t even wanted to get out of bed today.

“Yeah, it was.”

“You, me, and Dream in the centre?” Sapnap says, “that was great. We play pretty well together, huh?”

“We do,” George agrees. Sam had been right about that.

“You know, we’ll win the league at this rate,” Sapnap says. George starts jogging, and Sapnap follows easily.

George smiles at that. “Of course we will. We have a brilliant team and brilliant players. If Dream scores another last minute goal like that, we’ll have it in the bag.”

“You know, he couldn’t have done it without your assist,” Sapnap says. “You guys were great at the end there.”

“All I did was kick the ball.”

Sapnap shakes his head, “no. You could have shot at the goal. You could have gotten tackled. You passed back to Dream, setting him up for a goal. You didn’t even know if he’d be able to *make* that shot.”

George scoffs, “of course he’d be able to make it. He’s Dream.”

“And you’re *George*,” Sapnap says. He sounds entirely too genuine. “You know, I wouldn’t have been able to make that goal. You know that. I bet even Techno wouldn’t have been able to.”

“Yeah, because Techno isn’t a shooter.”

“Yeah, but I’m the closet we got before Dream,” Sapnap reminds him. “I’m telling you, I wouldn’t have been able to assist or shoot like that.”

“Well, no,” George says, “you’re *Sapnap*.”

Sapnap shoves him. Not hard enough to push him over, but enough to make him stumble. It makes George laugh, tripping over the grass before shoving Sapnap back until there’s several feet between them.

“You’re such an idiot,” Sapnap says. His voice is full of a smile.

“Takes one to know one,” George retaliates. Sapnap sends him a glare, one that George tries to dodge and parry with a grin.

It just about works, and Sapnap slows to a walk. George stays just one step ahead, wondering what Sapnap will respond with.

He doesn’t, though. Instead, he sends George a saccharine sweet look and says, like butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth, “so, how *is* it going with Dream?” in just the tone of voice that is one hundred per cent less innocent then he makes it sound.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Yeah, the way you kept staring at his ass while he was warming up yesterday wasn’t inconspicuous,” Sapnap says. “Everyone was watching you ignoring him.”

“If I was ignoring him, there would have been nothing to watch,” George says.

Sapnap looks at him. “Incorrect. You’re the most obvious loser I’ve ever met. The only reason Dream hasn’t filed a sexual harassment complaint yet is because he must be as oblivious as you are.”

“I still don’t know what you’re talking about,” George repeats.

“Sure, you don’t,” Sapnap says. His voice is so dry, George almost chokes on it. “You couldn’t even look at him stretching without blushing and popping a bon-”

“*Sapnap!*”

Sapnap grins, slick and sly. “Whatever. You were still avoiding looking at him.”

“I was not. I touched him,” George says, “I touched him twice! I wouldn’t have done that if I was ignoring him, would I?”

“You mean when we did *Team!*?” Sapnap asks, “because oh, my God. You literally looked like you were about to die when you realised you had to put your hand on top of Dream’s. It was the stupidest I have ever seen you look, and that’s saying something. I wish I could have taken a photo.”

“You are so mean.”

“Truth hurts.”

“Not this much!”

Sapnap laughs at him. “So you don’t deny that it’s true.”

“Oh-” George opens and closes his mouth like a fish out of water. “You’re setting me up. You’re driving me into a corner. This is harassment and I will report you.”

“Fine,” Sapnap says. He seems to think about something for a while, “just tell me one thing.”

“...That depends what it is,” George says, warily. He’s long since learnt to never trust whenever Sapnap asks him for one thing. It never usually ends well - for either of them.

“You don’t still hate him, do you?”

George starts. It’s not the question he had expected. He... doesn’t know the answer.

His silence speaks louder than anything he could have said. Sapnap’s look turns from teasing to sympathetic. They run the rest of the route in silence, and George almost misses Sapnap’s rambling.

That afternoon, George heads to the club. Sam should be there already, and hopefully some of the team. He doesn’t have much criticism after the match yesterday, but there are still things they’ll need to run over. Like Dream’s final goal, and the positions he had played. He wants to know if any of them have any suggestions, too.

Sam is sitting in the middle of the pitch. The sun is out today, and he leans back on his elbow, tipping his face to the sky. He looks relaxed, for once, and George is glad to see it.

“Sam!”

He looks up at his name. George smiles at him, making his way to the centre spot and sitting down next to him. “Hey, George. How did it go yesterday?”

“It went well,” George says, “Sapnap, Dream, and I seem like a pretty solid formation.”

“That’s good to hear. And Dream scored both goals?”

George nods. “Yeah. Fundy took a shot but missed in the early game. Dream’s final goal was incredible. He’ll be really good in the league.”

“I’m not surprised to hear that,” Sam says. “What were El Rapids like?”

“They were alright,” George says, “alright players. Their captain is nice. Their sportsmanship, not so much. But it’s nothing we can’t deal with for a friendly, you know?”

“Sure,” Sam says, sitting up slightly. “I can get them back over here if you want to play against them again at some point.”

“That would be helpful,” George says, “I’ll let you know. I want to talk to the rest of the team first, see what they think.”

“Of course. Do you know what you’re planning to do today?” Sam asks.

“I want to talk to them about formations,” George says, “if anyone has any suggestions or ideas for where to go. I think we should focus on tactics today. Maybe practice free kicks and penalties, if

we have time.”

“That’s a good idea,” Sam says. “It’ll be interesting to see what Dream thinks about it.”

“And Techno,” George says. “Speaking of them, I think they’re over it. They played well together yesterday, and Techno said everything was fine, but I didn’t get a chance to speak with Dream,” he doesn’t mention that that was mostly because he was too embarrassed to approach Dream post match, sweaty and gross and heaving with the after-game exhaustion and exhilaration. “I guess we’ll see today.”

“The enemy of my enemy is my friend,” Sam says, wisely. “I guess we should have expected this from putting two incredibly talented, similar players on the same pitch.”

George nods. “I guess you’re right. I don’t think Techno would be so immature as to drag it out for too long, though. I don’t know about Dream. As long as they don’t let it get in the way of practice or the league, I don’t care right now.”

“Good point,” Sam says. “As long as they can still play.”

“It’ll be fine,” George says, “they’ll get over it. You know, Phil won’t let it go too far anyway.”

“You’re right there,” Sam chuckles. He blinks slowly, sighing through his teeth. “Phil will be able to keep them both in check if you can’t. But I doubt they wouldn’t listen to their captain anyway.”

George makes a face. “I hope not. They’re both kind of anti-authority, though.”

“They’ll listen to you,” Sam says firmly, “and if they don’t, they’ll definitely listen to Phil. Everything will be fine. We’ll win the league and then they can air all their grievances.”

“Here’s hoping,” George says.

“Don’t be so doubtful. We have a strong team here in terms of ability. As long as we can still play professionally on pitch. I think Dream and Techno are professional enough not to let it affect the league,” Sam says. He sounds so sure of it, that George begins to feel more convinced too.

“Well, you are usually right about these things,” George says. He reaches over to tap the screen of Sam’s phone, where it’s lying on the astro beside him. He grimaces at the time. “Has anyone messaged you about being late?”

Sam purses his lips, shaking his head. “No. Maybe you’ll have to talk about punctuality with them as well.”

George groans. “You know, sometimes captaining this team makes me feel like a preschool teacher.”

Sam laughs at that. “How do you think I feel?”

“We’re not that bad, are we?”

“You’re not,” Sam says, “but the rest of them? When they’re off the pitch, they’re like children.”

“Tell me about it,” George grumbles. “I swear, we’ll turn up to the league finals and we’ll be three hours late at this rate.”

The face Sam makes is so distraught, George has to laugh. “Don’t even joke about that. If you say it too often, it’ll come true.”

The rest of the week training goes well. They come up with several formations and tactics. Dream turns out to be a blessing in disguise when he ends up having such a strong grasp of the rules that George could almost have thought he'd want to be a referee, not just a player.

Sam finally hears from the qualifiers organisation, which lessens some of George's stress. They won't take place until after the league, though, and George can't tell if that's something he's glad about or not.

He stays at the pitch late one evening after training and ends up catching Dream alone, too.

“You haven’t left yet?” Dream asks him. “You know, it’s getting dark. How are you getting home?”

George starts. He looks up from the notebook he’s been scribbling in, glancing first at Dream and then to the window. He’s right; the sun has almost completely set. “I didn’t realise it was so late. What are you still doing here?”

“I was putting stuff away,” Dream says. “I found, like, seven half deflated balls that had rolled under the bleachers.”

“Seven? That sounds like an exaggeration.”

Dream shakes his head. “No way. There were a lot. I put them in the equipment cupboard.”

“Hm. Thanks,” George says. He’ll have to inflate those tomorrow. “I guess I’ll get going. See you tomorrow?” He closes the notebook, standing up and tucking it into his duffel bag. “Bright and early, remember?”

Dream, at least, has the audacity to scoff and flush slightly at the jab at his tardiness. “Sure. Bright and early.”

“Good,” George says. He starts to leave, heading away from the pitch and towards the reception exit.

He doesn’t even get far before Dream runs to catch up. “Hey, George, wait! Do you, uh. Do you have a ride?”

George turns to face him. “What?”

“Do you have a ride?” Dream repeats. He looks uncertain, like he’s not sure where he stands.

“No, I... I usually just walk,” George says. If Dream keeps him here any longer, he’ll be walking home in pitch black.

“Well, look. Do you want me to drop you home?” Dream says, all in a sort of rush. George only just manages to understand him.

“Drop me home?”

“Yeah, I- I’ll give you a ride!”

George blinks. He looks at the time. “Are you sure?”

Dream nods, “yeah. Totally sure. Come on, my car is out front.”

“That... would be great, then,” George says. Dream falls into step beside him. “Thanks.”

“Of course,” Dream says.

He leads George over to his car once they get out of the club, opening the passenger side door and offering his arm out for George to climb in. He ignores it, sliding onto the seat himself and fastening the belt.

Dream just smiles, closing the door before crossing to the other side and climbing into the drivers side. “So, where do you live?”

He rattles off his address, watches Dream input it into his phone maps and start the car. “Thanks for this.”

“It’s no trouble,” Dream says immediately, “Besides, you live on the way to me. And I don’t want you walking home alone in the dark.”

He doesn’t know what to say to that, so he doesn’t say anything. George looks at himself in the wing mirror, watches Dream’s hands on the steering wheel, stares his feet. He doesn’t dare look at anything else.

“What were you writing in that notebook?” Dream asks into the silence. It’s not awkward, not really, but George still feels it’s pressure as if it’s shouting.

“Nothing.”

“You don’t wanna tell me?”

“I wasn’t writing anything,” George repeats. “Not anything that I’m gonna tell you about, anyway.”

“So it’s a secret,” Dream says. George doesn’t turn to look at him, but he can hear the smile. It sounds much louder in the dark. “That’s okay. I can keep ‘em.”

He finds himself laughing, “I’m not telling you what it was.”

“Really? What do I have to do to get you to tell me?” Dream asks.

“Nothing, because I’m not going to tell you.”

“Sure, sure,” Dream says. He sounds so sure of himself. They pull up behind traffic lights, and George watches the colours change, cycling through to red. Dream slows the car to a stop, turning to look at him, and George feels his eyes burn through his skin. “I’ll get it out of you one day.”

“Whatever you say, Dream,” George says. He feels almost like he’s tempting fate, like he’s been given a stick and he’s poking the bear. The look Dream gives him is ethereal.

Everything feels different here, where the only light is the red-orange-green from the traffic lights. Dream doesn’t look like himself. George isn’t afraid to watch him, to see him, to drag his eyes over every facet of Dream’s body and drink it all in like he’s been thirsty for years. The darkness takes every word he says and keeps it safe. It’ll be a surprise if he even remembers this tomorrow.

The smirk on Dream's face is worse. It heats up from the inside out. He doesn't even have to say anything before George flushes across the bridge of his nose and forces himself to look away.

It makes Dream laugh. It isn't cruel or cold, but it's enough to spend the rest of the drive in silence. When they pull up to George's house, he leaves without saying goodbye.

"How late were you at the pitch last night?" Sapnap asks him on their run. They've lapped one kilometre so far, and George is feeling the pleasant burn in his calves.

"Not that late," he answers. "Dream gave me a lift home."

Sapnap falters, stumbling to a halt. "He *what*."

"He gave me a lift home," George repeats. He slows down too, facing Sapnap with an exasperated look. "What? I thought you wanted me to try and get along with him."

Sapnap's tone takes on a decidedly poisonous quality. "That sly dog," he swears, "did he do anything, you know, untoward?"

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"All I'm saying," Sapnap says dramatically, "is that it was late. And he drove you home. And now he knows where you live. Anything could have happened."

"What are you implying right now?" George asks. "Nothing happened. Nothing *would* have happened. Please, Sapnap. Have some decorum."

"You're young!" Sapnap drawls, like he hasn't even spoken. "You're young, and you're in love even if you deny it! And Dream is an attractive young man, even I'll admit that. George, you don't exactly have the best track record when it comes to love-"

"What the fuck?"

"-And Dream is clearly flirting with you. I can't help it if I want to protect you. I can't let Dream take your innocence too early."

George glares at him. "What are you even going on about? I'm older than you. And Dream wasn't flirting! He was just giving me, his captain, a ride because it was dark and late and he didn't want me to walk home. It was friendly!"

Sapnap falls to his knees, holding his hands skyward and then bending to touch his forehead to the grass. "Lord, help me! It's already started!"

"Shut up."

"He didn't want you to walk home alone in the dark," Sapnap sits back on his heels and brings his hands, clasped, to his chest. "It would be romantic if I weren't unsure of his intentions."

"I can take care of myself."

"Geeeeoooorge."

“Sapnap, sit up. You’re making a scene.”

“*Geeeoooorge.*”

“Come on.”

Sapnap looks at him pityingly. “George. Just tell me one thing.”

“For crying out loud.”

“Am I about to lose you to *him*?”

“You’re such an idiot,” George says. “I’m leaving you here.” He starts to jog again, putting several metres between them.

Sapnap calls after him, “just answer the question!”

The only answer George gives is his middle finger. He doesn’t turn around to check if Sapnap is still following him, or see his reaction.

He catches up several minutes later, appearing at George’s side like nothing happened.

“Are you normal now?” George asks.

Sapnap nods. He looks much more composed. “Yes. So. As your best friend, it’s your duty to tell me everything.”

“I’m not telling you everything.”

“Ah-! Best friend code!”

“That’s not even a thing,” George says.

“It’s a thing now,” Sapnap says. “Shut up. Come on. Tell me. Spill!”

“There’s barely anything to tell,” George says. “He stayed late too, he saw I was still there, I asked what he was doing-”

“What was he doing?”

“If you let me finish, I’ll tell you. He said he was collecting up the stray balls on the pitch. Apparently, he found seven under the seats,” George says. “Seven! Then, we kind of got to talking. He asked how I was getting home, and I said I was walking. He asked if he could give me a ride, and I said sure.”

“Is that all that happened?” Sapnap asks doubtfully. “Tell me everything he said and did. In detail.”

George sighs and rolls his eyes. “Fine. Okay, uh. He opened the car door for me, I guess. Offered his arm to help me in.”

“Did you take it?”

“No. Why would I?”

Sapnap groans at him.

“Shut up. After that, I gave him my address and he was like ‘it’s on the way to my place, that’s

fine. Also I don't want you walking home alone in the dark.”” George says. He shrugs. “I dunno. He was just being friendly.”

“He was definitely flirting,” Sapnap says seriously. “I'm surprised he didn't invite himself inside.”

“Why would he have done that?”

Sapnap gives him a look of disbelief. “You are a lost cause, I swear to God.”

“What?!”

“Never mind that,” Sapnap says, “why were you staring late in the first place?”

“I was going through tactics,” George says. “Oh! He saw me writing in my notebook and asked what I was doing.”

“Did you tell him?”

“No.”

George is fairly sure that, had they been sitting down, Sapnap would have been burying his head in his hands. “You were flirting back?”

“No, I wasn't.”

“You were playing hard to get! *George*.”

“What?! I was just responding to what he did,” George says. Sapnap's tone is accusatory. “It wasn't flirting. Shut up.”

“It was totally flirting. You are so oblivious.”

“It wasn't!”

Sapnap just looks at him.

“...Right?”

He keeps looking.

“It wasn't flirting,” George says. “It wasn't. Sapnap.”

“George.”

“We weren't flirting.”

Sapnap's look turns disappointed. “You were. You both were.”

“Well- maybe he was, but I wasn't,” George says. He ignores the faint reminder of heat in his stomach, the burns on his skin from where Dream had just looked at him. He ignores fate, and the bear, and his fearlessness in the darkness. “I definitely wasn't.”

“Dream isn't stupid,” Sapnap says, “or oblivious. Not the way you are. He definitely would have thought you were flirting.”

“But I wasn't.”

“Would it be so bad if you were?”

George feels his brain grind to a halt. Sapnap’s words, the memories from last night, it all tangles around him until he can’t tell left from right.

Maybe...

Maybe.

Training is more awkward than George expected it to be.

Dream keeps staring at him. It burns cold in the daytime. Whenever George catches him, he looks away like nothing ever happened, until George isn’t sure if he’s imagining it or not.

Sapnap looks too. He looks between them, simultaneously judging George and warning Dream. When George can’t look at Dream as he warms up, he shakes his head in what looks like disbelief (George can’t quite tell - disbelief and disappointment have slowly become synonymous for Sapnap).

Sam looks at them too. George can already picture how that conversation will go: ‘what’s the deal with you and Dream, George? Please don’t get involved in anything before the league, okay? We need to keep our heads in the game. And don’t get a harassment report when you don’t need one, either.’

It makes him determined to do anything to avoid it. Sam’s disappointment is worse than Sapnap’s tenfold. He stops looking back at Dream, focusing anywhere but him.

George funnels all of his concentration into the five-a-side game they play. It means he plays better than he has played casually in a while. There’s something to be said for small victories. Still, Dream’s gaze is distracting enough.

Even so, the session goes well. He feels his confidence for the league build higher, and watching the way Sam watches them shows that his confidence grows too. Not that he had much to doubt in the first place, George reminds himself. The reassurance is welcome all the same.

He sits in the locker room for a while afterwards, listening to his team chatter and then slowly filter out as they leave. George pulls his boots off and tucks his legs beneath him on the bench, taking his notepad out again and turning it to the page he last left.

[He sketches a rough football pitch across a full page.](#) drawing a circle in goal and another in the centre circle for him and Ant.

Then, he adds a second spot in the centre circle to represent Sapnap, and a third for Dream. He puts two dots on the left of the goal, assigning the furthest one to Fundy and the other to Bad. He copies the same on the right side, giving one to Wilbur and the other to Punz. George puts two dots on the opposite side of the halfline, echoing where Wilbur and Fundy are, and puts Eret and Skeppy on them. He draws a final dot just outside of the penalty box, in between Eret and Skeppy, and assigns it to Techno.

It’s his working draft for their final formation. He makes a mental note to email it to Sam, and

maybe Sapnap too, before showing it to the team.

He sticks the pencil between his teeth. The door to the locker room swings open.

“Oh-! You are still here.”

George looks up to lock eyes with Dream. He isn’t sure what to say, holding the notebook in his hands and the pencil in his teeth.

Dream grins at him. “I was hoping you were. I was gonna ask if you wanted another ride home.”

“Sure,” George says. It’s not nearly as late as yesterday, but he finds himself unable to refuse.

“Yeah. Uh. Just... give me five minutes?”

“Of course,” Dream says. “Will you show me what you’re writing today?”

George scoffs. He closes the notebook with a snap. “You wish. Wait for me outside?”

“I’d never leave without you,” Dream says. It’s oddly sincere, more so than George was expecting. It bubbles in his stomach, churning up his throat like seasickness.

He almost likes it.

Dream offers him a smile and a teasing salute as he leaves the locker room. George takes his absence as a chance to pull his day shoes on again, and then settle his heart rate. He doesn’t even know why it’s risen so high.

He packs up his duffel bag, making sure to bury his notebook at the bottom of it. George isn’t even sure why he’s so against showing it to Dream; it’s not like it holds anything private.

It’s the principle of the matter, he supposes.

George makes sure to lock the door to the locker room on his way out, and switch the lights off. When he gets outside, he sees Dream leaning against the passenger door of his car. As he approaches, Dream opens it for him.

“I can open my own door, you know.”

“I know,” Dream says. He closes it for George too.

George almost opens his mouth to counter him. As soon as the door closes, though, the moment is lost. Dream slides into the driver’s side, and suddenly, all of his words leave him.

“Do you mind if I ask you something?” Dream asks.

George shrugs. “Sure. If I can ask you something back.”

He hears Dream chuckle under his breath. “Sure. Why do you ignore me at practice?”

George is quiet for a moment. He listens to himself breathe several times. “I... I don’t know.”

“Don’t you? Or do you just not wanna tell me?”

“Which one would you prefer?” George asks him.

“Which one has a better answer?”

“It depends what you want the answer to be.”

Dream doesn’t take his eyes off the road, but George can feel how he wants to look over at him. “What answers are there, then?”

“There’s an embarrassing one,” George says, “and a stupid one.”

“Tell me both. And then you can ask me whatever you like.”

“Okay. The stupid answer is that I don’t know if I like you. That’s why I ignore you,” George says.

“You don’t like me?” Dream repeats. “Why?”

George sighs. “It’s why I took so long to sign you on. I... Do I have to tell you now?”

“You don’t have to tell me anything,” Dream says. He sounds genuine - for all that he pushes, George doesn’t think he’ll ever go too far.

“Thanks. I’m sure you’ll find out at some point, I guess. Sapnap will probably tell you,” George says. “If he hasn’t already.”

“Then what’s the other answer?”

George grimaces. “I just can’t look at you. You distract me too much.”

“I distract you?” Dream asks. He sounds almost proud of it.

“Shut up. Yeah. You do.”

“That’s great,” Dream says. George regrets saying anything. “How are you gonna put both of us in the centre circle if I distract you too much?”

“I said shut up! It’s my turn to ask now.”

Dream laughs. “Ask, then.”

“How did you get that scar?”

“It’s stupid,” Dream says, “you’ll laugh at me.”

“More than you laughed at me?” George counters. “Come on. You said.”

“I know, I know,” Dream says. “Okay, uh. As a kid, we had this wooden sand-pit in the backyard. Like, it was pushed up in the corner, filled with sand, and my siblings and I would sit in there for hours, you know?”

“Sure,” George says. There’s an empty sort of pit in his stomach, like he can already tell where this is going.

“So one day, it was raining, or whatever. My sister and I went out to go play in it, right, but the sand got all clumped and damp,” Dream continues. “Obviously. Our parents told us to stop using it, it was making a huge mess and everything. So we did, we put the lid back on. And then my sister stood on top of the lid.”

“Of course I wanted to be like her, right? So I got up there too, and she started spinning around. Like a ballerina.”

“Oh no,” George says. “Don’t tell me...”

Dream nods. “Yep. I started spinning too. And you know it had been raining. The lid was wet and slippery. And I was a kid, I didn’t have the best balance.”

“Did you-”

“I fell.”

“Jesus.”

Dream laughs. “Yeah. Pretty much. I slipped over and hit my head on the brick wall behind us. Got nothing but this stupid scar to show for it.”

“I think it looks kind of badass,” George says.

“Not once you hear the story, though,” Dream says. He scoffs, turning down George’s road. “It is kinda stupid.”

“Must have been a pretty hardcore wall to scar that bad,” George says. “And I’m not lying when I say I think it looks hot.”

“What?”

George falters. He turns his attention from Dream to the window, staring as the house numbers slowly begin to count down to his. Thank God. “What what?”

“What did you just say?” Dream asks. He sounds like he’s grinning, and it only serves to make George blush. At least in the low light, and with his attention on the road, there’s no way Dream could see it.

“Nothing. I said nothing.”

“Really? It sounded an awful lot like you just called me h-”

“Shut up,” George says quickly. “I said nothing. I have no idea what you’re talking about. And oh, wow. Look, that’s my house,” he wrenches the door open as soon as Dream approaches the pavement, before he’s even stopped moving.

“George!”

He bites his lip to stop himself smiling, waiting for Dream to actually roll to a stop before he attempts to slide out of the car. Once he can, he wastes no time in climbing out, slamming the door, and taking a few steps back towards his front door. He calls through the window, “You know what, thanks for the ride, Dream! I’ll see you tomorrow!”

Dream just shakes his head and grins at him. He rolls down the windows, and leans across the centre console, resting his forearm against the shoulder of the passenger seat. He looks so stupidly cocky that George can’t decide if he wants to fall in love or throw up. His smile is more of a smirk, one that burns embers in George’s stomach. “I’ll see you then. And for the record?”

George looks at him. Immediately, he regrets it. Making eye contact with Dream is like pouring gas on an open goddamn flame. “What?”

“I think you look hot, too,” Dream says. George doesn’t even get a chance to flush before Dream revs the car and speeds off, like some sort of asshole out of movie. He hates him. George stands in

his front garden and he really, properly hates him.

Thankfully, Sapnap is awake, and all too willing to listen to George's woes, so he calls him before he even shuts the front door.

“George?”

“Thank God you answered,” George says. He kicks his trainers off, dumping his duffel in the corner of his living room. He can go through it later. “I have a problem.”

Sapnap immediately sounds more alert, “what? What happened? Do I need to call the police?”

“It’s about Dream,” George says. He can feel how Sapnap relaxes over the line.

“You almost gave me a heart attack,” Sapnap says. “So what happened with Dream?”

George sighs. He flops onto the sofa, sliding down the cushions until not even half his body is supported by them. “He drove me home again.”

“Is that bad?”

“No. It’s *good*, that’s the problem,” George whines. “He was asking me things today.”

“That’s usually how people hold conversations.”

“Shut up! He asked me why I ignore him all the time.”

Sapnap just manages to catch his laughter in time. “Oh, yeah? And what did you tell him?”

“I told him that I ignore him because he distracts me,” George says sullenly. Sapnap laughs properly this time.

“Are you serious? Are you *stupid*?” Sapnap asks. “George!”

“I know!”

“Well, what did he say to that?”

“He made fun of me.”

Sapnap snorts. “Did he at least tell you something back?”

“I asked how he got his scar,” George says. “The story wasn’t even worth it.”

“That sucks,” Sapnap says. He doesn’t even sound sympathetic, just placating. “Did you say anything else?”

“Yeah,” George says. He doesn’t even want to say it again. “It doesn’t bear repeating. You know, I think I’m just gonna hang up-”

“Woah, woah, wait,” Sapnap says. “Slow down. Tell me what you said!”

“I don’t want to.”

“Tell me.”

“Sapnap...”

“Tell me!”

George makes a face. “Do I have to?”

“Yes. Come on, I’m your best friend, right?” Sapnap asks, “so tell me. Come on.”

“I said I thought he was hot,” George says. He hates it as soon as he says it. Somehow, the embarrassment is worse when he’s sat in his living room alone, when there’s just fluorescent light listening to him, instead of darkness and Dream.

“Really?”

“Yes, really, why would I lie about that?!” George exclaims. “Oh, God, how am I ever going to face him tomorrow? He’ll never respect me as his captain again.”

“Well, what did he say back?” Sapnap asks. “Was he, like, embarrassed? Did he flirt back? You know, give me some context here.”

“Okay, um. We were in his car. We had just finished talking about his scar, and he was like ‘I hate it, it’s stupid’,” George says. He puts on a bad accent to imitate Dream’s voice. “So I said, ‘well, I think it looks badass and hot’ and he asked what I said, so I pretended like I didn’t say anything.”

“Because that always goes well for you.”

“Shut up. Then he pulled up outside my house, and I got out of the car, and he sort of leaned over to shout out of the window like ‘for the record, I also think you’re hot’,” George says. He resists the urge to bury his head in his hands. “And now I don’t know what to do. He was just joking, right?”

“George...”

“I have no idea how I’ll ever be able to look him in the eyes again.”

“As if you ever did that in the first place,” Sapnap says. “But honestly, George, it sounds kinda like he was flirting back. Didn’t I say he totally liked you back?”

George screws his face up. “I don’t know. Did you say that? If you did, you’re wrong.”

“Mmm, I don’t think I am,” Sapnap says, “I think he likes you back. I think you should tell him you really do love him.”

“There is no way I’m doing that.”

“Why not? You only live once.”

“That’s stupid,” Geroge says, “besides, if he doesn’t like me back, that’ll be so embarrassing for me. Then he might quit the team and I’ll have to explain to everyone why he left. If he, by some miracle, does like me back, we’ll also have to explain that to everyone. And he might have to leave the team after all, because I don’t even know what the club rules are when it comes to dating someone on your team,” he explains, “and I... I don’t want to have to fire him just because I think he’s hot.”

“All of those sound worth it for love,” Sapnap says.

“Don’t be stupid,” George says. “I thought you were going to support me and give me helpful advice.”

“I am giving you helpful advice,” Sapnap says, “I’m advising you to commit to it and admit to him.”

“That isn’t helpful.”

“It is so helpful, you’re just being oblivious to it right now,” Sapnap says. “I’m telling you, just tell him how you feel. Dream is a nice guy, right? Even if he doesn’t reciprocate, he’d at least have the good grace to let you down gently.”

“That doesn’t make me feel better at all!” George snaps. “Ugh. I... Do you really think I have to tell him?”

“Yes, I really think you have to tell him.”

George is quiet for a minute. “Can I wait until after the league?”

“Yeah,” Sapnap says. “As long as you tell him immediately after we win.”

“What if we lose?”

“Then tell him anyway, then you can kiss it better.”

It makes George laugh. That was probably Sapnap’s intention. “Thanks, Sap. Should I keep flirting with him?”

“Do you think you’d be able to *stop* flirting with him?” Sapnap counters, “like, start treating him like the rest of the team. Don’t avoid his eye, don’t get flustered, don’t stare at his ass while he stretches.”

“I do not stare at his ass while he stretches.”

“Hey, you know I wouldn’t blame you,” Sapnap says. “*I* stare at his ass while he stretches.”

“Sapnap!”

“I’m just saying!”

“I don’t care if you’re just saying, that’s inappropriate,” George says. He tries to ignore the almost-jealousy building up in his stomach. Where Dream had inspired fire, now he chokes on smoke and bile.

“Alright, sure,” Sapnap says. He sounds suspiciously doubtful, like he’s plotting something. George doesn’t like it. “Either way, do you think you’d be able to treat him the way you treat Techno? Or Wilbur, or Fundy, or Eret?”

George chews the inside of his lip. *Could* he do that?

Sapnap takes his silence as an answer. “Exactly. Your only solution is to tell him.”

“What will it even solve?”

“Closure?” Sapnap suggests. “Dream will ask you out, or he’ll reject you. Either way, you’ll get an answer, and then you won’t be stuck in between both of them.”

George sighs. “I guess so. I guess you’re right. Thanks.”

“You’re welcome,” Sapnap says. “Honestly, what would you ever do without me?”

“Probably nothing different,” George says on instinct. Sapnap laughs. “I’ll talk to Dream after the league, I guess.”

“After we win the league,” Sapnap corrects. “And you’ll keep staring at his ass, right?”

“...”

“George.”

“Shut up before I hang up on you.”

“Okay, I’m shutting up. I’m hanging up on you first, though,” Sapnap says. “I’ll see you at training tomorrow, right?”

“Of course,” George says, “what a stupid question. Why would I not show up to the training of my own team?”

“Forget I asked then,” Sapnap says, “go wallow in your self pity, or something.”

“I will,” George says. “Goodbye, Sapass.”

“Fuck you,” Sapnap says.

George jabs at the hangup button and lets his phone fall to the sofa cushions. Even after calling Sapnap, he doesn’t really have any more idea of what to do than before.

Dream seems to have dug out a permanent corner of George’s brain to hold down for himself. George finds himself staring through the windows of it, wondering if he really does want to go inside it or not.

He decides that night that he’ll ignore it for as long as he can. He’ll wait until after the league. He’ll have to.

He won’t risk the league on him and Dream. Sapnap would never forgive him.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for reading <3 as usual, id love to hear your thoughts.

try this trick and spin it

Chapter Summary

a date, and a conversation.

Chapter Notes

quick thank u to everyone for reading! i appreciate u <3

chapter title from [where is my mind](#) by the pixies

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George arrives late to the pitch the next morning. He's almost glad for it, because it means everyone is waiting for him, and he doesn't need to spend too long looking at Dream (or Sapnap) before starting some basic drills.

Neither Sam nor Phil are here today. He assumes Sam is off doing admin stuff in his office, or something, and probably won't enjoy an intrusion. Phil is likely at home. George wonders how the baby is doing.

The rest of the team, thankfully, seem to be in an agreeable mood today. There are no protests when George instructs them to run laps around the pitch (which is normally a task met with much disdain). He's grateful for it; he feels far too tired to deal with any bullshit today. Trying not to think about Dream all night has exhausted him.

Sapnap does catch his eye, though. If anyone were to stand up to him right now, it would be Sapnap. Except all he does is look disgustingly sympathetic and look at Dream and back. George mouths for him to, 'shut up.'

He spent the night whining to Sapnap about Dream. He's not about to start doing it in daylight hours as well. George makes sure to put Sapnap in goal just so he can launch a football at him.

Practice ends up going well. Dream tries to catch his attention several times, and the one time George accidentally looks back, he winks. George puts it out of his mind for as long as he can (he'll have a breakdown about it later, he tells himself, *later*). Once it's over, George calls the team around the bench.

"Alright," he announces, "that was a good session, everyone. I just wanted to keep you all in the loop. Sam's organising some more friendlies between other clubs. We'll send emails out when we know when, I expect to see all of you at those. Even if you don't turn up to training, make sure you turn up to those matches. Especially as we approach the league. I still want to assess everyone's on-pitch ability and adjust our starting formation as needed. Again, we'll send emails out. If anyone hasn't been copied into the team mailing list, let me or Sam know, okay?"

Fundy raises his hand. "What if we can't make the matches?"

George bites the inside of his cheek. “Well, I’d hope you make every effort possible to turn up. As we get closer to the league, playing matches as a team will become more valuable than doing drills that we all already know how to do. But if you really won’t be able to make it, we’ll just play benched. And I’ll have you run ten laps at the next practice session.”

He grins at the disgruntled expressions on his team’s face. “I’m only kidding. Sort of.”

“You’re going to be the death of me,” Sapnap groans. “Ten laps? George. That’s excessive.”

“Twenty if you talk back to me.”

“*George.*”

“I guess you better turn up on time, then,” George says. “Anyway. Sam recommended doing something as a team other than football, so there’s a standing invitation to the pub on Saturday, if anyone wants to come. Send me a message and we’ll sort out a time.”

“This Saturday?” Techno asks. George nods. “Damn. I have to go baby shopping with Phil. I’m not sure if I’ll make it.”

Wilbur turns to look at him with... some sort of expression on his face. George can’t quite identify it. “You? Baby shopping?”

“Yeah. What about it?” Techno asks. Wilbur’s tone makes George feel like he should be embarrassed on Techno’s behalf.

“Nothing,” Wilbur says quickly. “You just don’t seem the sort.”

“What do you mean by that?” Techno says.

George interrupts before they can start a brawl on his football pitch. “It doesn’t matter. I’ll let you know the time and we’ll see who turns up. Is that alright for everyone?”

There’s a chorus of agreement. “Great,” George says. “Good practice today. I’ll see you all tomorrow, I hope.”

The team begins to file out. Wilbur and Techno leave together, followed by Fundy, Eret, and Punz. Bad gives George a smile, following Skeppy as he dribbles a ball towards the locker room. Before long, it’s just George, Dream, and Sapnap left.

“Do you want-”

“George, I’ll be ou-”

Sapnap and Dream speak at the same time. They turn to each other and Sapnap chuckles. “I’ll be outside,” Sapnap says, “George, if you need anything, just text me, okay?”

George nods. Sapnap leaves. Suddenly, he’s alone with Dream, and he looks sort of nervous.

“Um,” Dream says. “So I was wondering if you wanted a ride home again today,” he says. It doesn’t sound like everything he wanted to say.

“That would be nice,” George says. “If it’s not any trouble.”

“Of course not,” Dream says, “I already told you. It’s not a problem. I like it. I like doing it.”

“Then thanks,” George says. He can’t help the smile that bubbles up with Dream’s words.

Dream smiles too. “And I was wondering if... maybe if I could take you out? For a drink, or something. If you like.”

“Really?”

Dream runs a hand through his hair. “Yeah. Is-is that okay? You don’t have to say anything. You can tell me later.”

George bites his lip. “Okay. Yeah. Sure.”

“Is that okay, you’ll tell me later, or okay, you’ll go?” Dream asks.

“Okay, I’ll go.”

Dream’s grin seems to widen. “Really? You’re serious?”

“I’m serious,” George says. “I mean, we’ll have to talk about this, right? But... I’ll go with you.”

“Right,” Dream agrees. “Oh, man. I didn’t expect you to say yes.”

“You thought I was going to say no? After last night?”

“I thought you’d wake up this morning too embarrassed to even look me in the eye,” Dream admits, “I didn’t expect you to agree to let me take you out.”

George thinks he ought to be almost offended by that. As it is, he finds himself blushing, wrapping his arms around himself and trying to avoid Dream’s eye. “I’m not embarrassed.”

“Aren’t you?”

“Of course not,” George says. He still can’t look at him. He bites his tongue between his teeth and tries not to smile.

“Sure,” Dream says. He sounds like he knows something. “Well, are you free tomorrow? After practice?”

“Yeah,” George says. He feels giddy. His heart is beating so fast it could almost jump out of his chest. “Yeah, I’m free.”

Dream smiles too, hooking a tooth over the corner of his lip like he’s trying to suppress it. “Great. Great!”

“Great,” George repeats. He feels like a kid with a crush. Sapnap is going to have a field day with this.

He gets to the pitch early.

Sapnap is there too, and George is almost glad for it. He sits next to him on the bench in the locker room and starts to pull his football boots out of his duffel.

Sapnap finishes rolling the tops of his socks down before turning to him with a slick smirk. “Soo. How was the ride yesterday?”

George frowns at him. “It was fine. Why are you talking like that?”

“I was just wondering if you’d finally grown the balls to invite him in,” Sapnap says, “but never mind about that. Tell me what went down!”

“Nothing ‘went down’,” George says. He leans down so he doesn’t have to look at Sapnap, under the pretense of untying his trainers and replacing them with his boots. “We just talked. You know, like friends do.”

“That can’t be all that happened,” Sapnap pushes, “Dream walked out of the club yesterday looking like a cat that got *all* the cream.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Geeooorge.”

George laughs. “Nothing happened. I promise... except.”

Sapnap pounces on it. “Except? Except what?”

“He’s taking me out today.”

There’s about five seconds of silence while Sapnap processes what George says. Then: “What?!”

George can’t help the giddy smile on his face. “Yeah. We’re going out today. After practice.”

“Are you serious?!”

“Yes.”

“George! And you tried to tell me nothing happened. I’m never believing a word you say again,” Sapnap says. “What the hell?! I can’t believe this. And you’re going today?”

“Today.”

“After practice?”

“After practice.”

Sapnap makes a face. “...When you’re all sweaty and gross?”

“It won’t be that bad,” George says. “Don’t say that! He’ll be sweaty and gross too.”

“If that’s what you’re into,” Sapnap says.

“Ew. Shut up. You’re such an idiot.”

“You’re the one going on a date with a gross and sweaty guy.”

George says, “don’t call it a date.”

“Why not?” Sapnap asks, “is that not what it is? Two guys who clearly like each other going out for, what, a drink and dinner? Alone? George, please. He’s winin’ and dinin’ you.”

George ignores the butterflies that begin to fly around his stomach. “Shut up.”

“He is!”

“Shut up, Sapnap,” he says, “he’s not wining and dining me. I don’t *get* wined and dined.”

The look Sapnap gives him is dubious. “Sure, George. Either way, he’s the one taking you out. And you’re going to be gross and sweaty. And I can’t believe you didn’t tell me immediately.”

George just shrugs. “Sorry.”

“No, you’re not.”

“No, I’m not.”

“Yeah, exactly,” Sapnap says. The door to the locker room swings open, and Bad and Skeppy walk in, hand in hand. “Oh, hey guys.”

George watches their fingers. “Hey.”

Skeppy wrenches his hand away as soon as he realises they’re being watched. “Hi, George. Sapnap. What are- what are you doing here so early?”

“I’m the captain,” George says, “why wouldn’t I be early?”

“You weren’t early yesterday,” Sapnap mutters. George kicks him.

“We were just coming in to warm up,” Bad explains. “Do you wanna come too? Before the rest of the team get here.”

George shrugs, adjusting his socks. “Sure. Sapnap?”

“Sounds good,” Sap says. “I wonder when Dream will get here.”

George has to resist the urge to kick him again. That would be less than inconspicuous. “He’s usually late.”

“Not always,” Bad says. He pushes the locker room door back open, holding it for Skeppy, Sapnap and George to file past him. “Sometimes he’s on time.”

“Sometimes,” George emphasises. He starts down the corridor towards the pitch, stepping out onto the astro. There’s already a bag of footballs sat by the bench, half open and slouching on the concrete. He beelines for it, pulling one out and tossing it from one hand to the other.

“Bad, will you stretch with me?” Skeppy asks.

“Of course,” Bad says. Sapnap approaches George with an expectant look.

“No way.”

“George.”

“I’m not stretching with you,” he says. “Come on. I want to do keepy-ups.”

Sapnap grimaces, “keepy-ups? We’re not in primary school anymore.”

George shrugs, tossing the ball and catching it on the top of his foot. He bounces it from his toe to

his knee and back again. “Whatever you say, Sapnap. First to hundred gets ten quid?”

The look he gets is calculating and suspicious. Sapnap retrieves his own ball from the bag. “You’re so going to lose.”

“Okay, Sapnap,” George says. He flicks the ball up again, catching it in his hands. “Ready?”

Sapnap nods. “Get on with it.”

“Go,” George says. He drops the ball on his foot, counting under his breath. Out the corner of his eye, he sees Sapnap do the same, kicking up, bouncing the ball off his chest when he kicks too high.

George almost wins, until Skeppy manages to run in and grab his football just before he reaches one hundred. “Skeppy!”

Sapnap cheers. “You owe me ten pounds!”

“I do not,” George says. He snatches the football back from Skeppy, glaring at him.

“You literally said-!”

George shakes his head. “Nope. Nuh uh. I take it back.”

“You can’t do that,” Sapnap says.

“Skeppy cheated,” George says, “he broke our deal. It doesn’t count anymore. Blame Skeppy.”

Skeppy grins. “I did nothing wrong.”

“You cost me ten pounds,” Sapnap says, “that’s wrong.”

“Don’t fight,” Bad calls. George turns to him, watching him stretch his calves. “Come on, I’ll give you ten pounds.”

“I don’t want it from you,” Sapnap says. “It’s not the same.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” George asks.

Sapnap just grins at him. “Nothing to worry your little head about, Georgie.”

George grimaces. “That is not a sentence I like.”

The rest of the team slowly starts to appear. First Techno, followed by Wilbur, Fundy, and Eret. Then Punz, Callahan, and Ant. Quackity and Dream arrive last. Q looks tired, and Dream looks red in the face, like he just ran a marathon.

“What happened to you?” Sapnap asks Dream, kicking his ball over to him.

Dream grins, catching it and drop kicking it back over to him. “I woke up late. My car broke down. I ran the rest of the way here.”

George feels his face fall. “You ran here?”

“Yeah,” Dream says, “but don’t worry! I’m still free for tonight.”

“Great,” George says. He feels everyone’s eyes on him, but he deliberately doesn’t look back.

“Well, now we’re all finally here, we might as well get started.”

He meets Dream in the locker room after practice. He’s in the middle of pulling his jersey off and switching it out for a more casual cotton t-shirt, and George tries to ignore how his back muscles tense up when he moves.

He’s already changed, having packed his duffel last night with a pair of jeans and a navy t-shirt to avoid having to go out in his kit. “Are you nearly ready?”

Dream turns around. His shirt is slightly ridden up. George forces his blush back down. “Sure. Give me two seconds.”

George nods, “sure.” When Dream looks like he’s about to reach for his sneakers, George hands them over. Their hands brush, and George’s breath catches in his throat.

Dream smiles at him. “Thanks.”

He watches as Dream leans down to lace the shoes up, and then as he shoves a hoodie and his boots in his own bag. “Are you ready to go?”

“Yeah,” Dream says, “come on. We can call a car, or walk. It’s not too far.”

“Where are we going?” George asks. He follows Dream out to the reception of the club, waving to Fundy as they pass him on the way out, before Dream begins to lead him down the street.

“It’s a surprise,” Dream says. “It’s a secret.”

“More secrets?”

Dream laughs, “sure, more secrets. This is a tiny secret, though.”

“A tiny secret? You’re taking me somewhere I don’t know, this could be a kidnapping plot,” George says, “how do I trust you?”

“A face like this?” Dream says, pointing to himself, “why wouldn’t you trust it?”

George pushes at his shoulder. “Shut up. Tell me where you’re taking me.”

Dream teases, “fine. I’m taking you to the airport first. We’ll have a meal in one of the restaurants at Gatwick, before boarding a flight to a beautiful Caribbean island, with white sand beaches and cocktails on tap. There, we’ll stay in a honeymoon suite and spend our days on the beach and evenings in the hot tub, drinking glasses of champagne and strawberries like we just got married.”

“You’re so stupid,” George says. “A honeymoon suite?”

“Only the best for my honeypie,” Dream says, with a grin.

“I would divorce you the instant we got home,” George says, semi seriously. “Tell me where we’re really going.”

“Fine,” Dream says. “We’re going to a burger place. I’ll buy you whatever you like, and we’ll talk

and get to know each other outside of football.”

“Burgers?”

Dream chews his tongue. He sounds suddenly nervous. “Yeah. Do you like that?”

“Yeah! Yeah. Burgers are fine. They’re great,” he says quickly. Something in his stomach, something George desperately tries to ignore, rushes to soothe each and every one of Dream’s worries. He doesn’t quite know what to do with it.

Dream’s face relaxes. “Great. Well, it’s a really nice shop.”

“I hope they live up to your talk.”

“They totally will,” Dream says. “I’d never bring you somewhere bad.”

“I can’t wait then,” he says. Dream guides him down a short street with a hand on his elbow, and George tries not to feel the giddiness in the bottom of his stomach.

They come to a stop in front of a small hole-in-the-wall sort of place, with several rickety looking chairs out the front. There’s a deep red umbrella shading one of the outdoor tables, throwing a shadow onto the shopfront. Dream steps up to the door and holds it open for George.

“Thanks,” he says, “but I can do that, you know.”

“I know you can,” Dream says. “Just let me spoil you for today.”

“Is that how you flirt with all the guys?” George asks. Dream follows him into the shop, leading the way down an aisle of tables to one in the far corner.

“You’re the only guy I flirt with,” Dream says. It’s almost uncomfortably genuine, and George almost doesn’t know how to reply.

“...Really?”

“Yeah,” Dream says. “Is... is that okay?”

“Yeah. Yeah! That’s okay,” George says. He feels like he’s been blushing since they left the pitch. “Um. Should we sit down?”

Dream makes a move to pull George’s chair out for him. Their hands touch again when George tries to go for it too, causing prickles of ice cold electricity to spark in his fingertips. The smile he gets from Dream is shy and almost awkward.

“Sorry,” he says, “I know, you can-”

“Do it myself,” George finishes for him. “It’s okay. It’s... I like it sometimes.”

Dream’s face lights back up. George can’t help the happiness that swoops in through his intestines. He sits at the opposite side of the table, biting the corner of his lip. George watches unashamedly.

He reaches for one the laminated menus folded in the centre of the table. They’re greasy, the sort of sticky that lingers around spilled coke and oil. George unfolds it out in front of both of them, scanning across the text. Dream leans over and points at an option in the middle of a column.

“That one’s good.”

“Sunrise?” George asks. Dream nods. “How can you read that upside down?”

Dream chuckles. “I just can. It’s not that hard.”

“Sure,” George says. “What are you going to get?”

“I usually get the Sunrise,” Dream admits, “do you want that too?”

“Okay,” George says. He feels kind of lost looking at the menu. “Thanks. Are we splitting the bill?”

“Absolutely not,” Dream says. “You can pay next time.”

The fire licking up George’s bones is stoked. “Next time? Aren’t you getting ahead of yourself?”

“I’m optimistic,” Dream says. He says it like he already knows George is going to say yes to him. “Call it an intuition.”

“An intuition?” George repeats. “You could just ask me out again.”

He doesn’t quite know where his anxiety has disappeared off to, but he’s glad for it. The freedom in his words is refreshing, and the lead weight in his stomach has turned to churning anticipation, but the good kind. He finds himself relishing in it for once.

The look Dream gives him is curious, like he doesn’t know quite what to make of George. Like he knows he has access to the utmost parts of him, but he still doesn’t know how to put them together and make a picture.

George thinks he likes it.

“What would you say if I did?” Dream asks. His eyes burn, smouldering with ash and flame. George at once feels like he is the only one in the universe.

He runs his finger across the greasy menu on the table. Dream sits in his silence all too willingly. “I would say yes.”

“Would you?”

“Yes.”

“If I asked you on a date, would you say yes?” Dream reaches out with his own hand, chasing George’s across the table until their fingertips touch.

“Yes.”

George can taste his honesty on the tip of his tongue, burning sour and green, spilling out acrid fumes until he’s certain he’s poisoning Dream too. He thinks, he knows, Dream would breathe it all in just for him. It’s too much.

Dream nods, slowly. Then he smiles. “Good. So you really can pay next time.”

The moment is shattered. While George can still taste the memory of truth on his lips, it merges with sugar glass, and he smiles too. A blush rises in his cheeks, and his nerves flood back into his stomach.

“Are you even going to order?” he asks, tapping a fingernail against the menu, encouraging Dream

out of his seat.

“I’m going,” Dream says. When he stands up, he squeezes George’s fist in his before he leaves.

“Thank you!” George calls after him. They aren’t alone anymore, and he feels eyes on his shoulders in Dream’s absence.

He returns soon, though, sliding back into George’s peripheral like he never left. “It won’t be long,” Dream says. “Fifteen minutes?”

“Great,” George says. “Plenty of time to get to know each other, then.”

Dream grins, “totally. You first, though.”

“Why me first?”

“Just say it,” Dream says, “tell me your Tinder bio, or something.”

“I don’t have Tinder,” George says. “Um. I’m twenty four, I’m a Scorpio, I’ve been playing football since I was, like, five. God, I don’t know. I like martinis and Queen, and I hate parties. What about you?”

“I’m twenty one, I’m a Leo,” Dream says, repeating every point George hit, “I’ve been playing football since I was six. I hate martinis and Queen, and I love parties.”

“Do you actually?”

Dream’s smirk blurs to a genuine smile. “No. I mean, I do hate martinis, but I like Queen. And parties are okay, I guess.”

“Good,” George says, “otherwise I would have left.”

“That’s a deal breaker for you?”

“Liking parties? Yeah,” George says. “I’m not committing to someone who’ll drag me out to events that I don’t even want to go to.”

“So you’re planning on committing to me?”

“I didn’t say *that*. You’re as bad as Sapnap,” George accuses.

Dream laughs. “Really?”

George scrunches his nose up. “Really. Maybe.”

“Maybe?”

“Yeah,” George says, “maybe. Ask me again later.”

Dream balances his elbow on the table edge, leaning his chin on his palm. He bites the nail of his index finger in a smile. “Later.”

“After you’ve paid for my meal,” George clarifies, “Sapnap never does that. It would put you way ahead of him.”

“Well, I hope I haven’t got competition,” Dream says.

“Against Sapnap?” George says. He grimaces. “No. No way. He’s my best friend, but I don’t want to kiss him.”

Something about Dream just pulls every tiny thought that George has out of him, no matter how embarrassing it is. It makes Dream smirk, like he knows exactly what’s happening. “So you wanna kiss me?”

“Shut up.”

“No, tell me. You wanna kiss me.”

“I said shut up. Actually, I said nothing about kissing at all,” George says. “You must be imagining things. We should book a med checkup for you soon.”

Dream gives him a withering look. “Very funny, George. Deny it all you want. You just said you want to kiss me.”

“Okay, Dream,” George says. “Whatever you say.”

The sly smile Dream adopts seems to say everything he wants it to. He looks at George like he knows George couldn’t look away. George feels it melt all the way up his insides.

The next morning, the air is cold and crisp. George welcomes it, welcomes the mist and the drizzling rain. It’s a harsh difference from the fiery embers from last night, but one he enjoys.

Sapnap wiggles his eyebrows as soon as he sees George, grinning widely. “George!”

“Sapnap.”

“George!”

“Sapnap.”

Sapnap jogs over to him. “You know, I didn’t think you’d come today.”

“What? Why not?”

“Well, you know,” Sapnap says, like there really is something George hasn’t picked up on.

“No, I don’t,” he says.

“You know, after your date with Dream,” Sapnap hints.

“I have no idea what you’re trying to say.”

Sapnap sighs. “Whatever, never mind. So, how was it, anyway?”

“It was fine,” George says.

“Just fine?”

He shrugs. The sky is overcast, and the fog has barely lifted from last night. It makes him almost

claustrophobic. “It was just a date. It went how dates go. What do you expect me to say, that he got down on one knee and proposed with a mariachi band?”

“No,” Sapnap says, “don’t be stupid. Tell me what happened. What did you talk about? Did he walk you home? Did he kiss you goodbye on your doorstep?”

“We went to this burger joint. We kind of flirted, I guess,” George says. “I dunno. He asked if we could go again. Then we left.”

“And that’s all that happened?”

“Yeah.”

“Nothing juicy?” Sapnap presses, “nothing interesting? Come on, George, throw me a bone here,”

George makes a face. “I really don’t know what to tell you. He told me he’s a Leo. He’s twenty one. He’s played football since he was six.”

Sapnap looks like someone just stood on a kitten in front of him. “*Please* tell me you talked about more than football.”

“Of course we talked about more than football,” George says, “what do you take me for? I’m not that stupid.”

“Good,” Sapnap says. “So what else did you talk about?”

“We just talked. He said he liked MARVEL, too,” George says. He huffs, unscrewing the cap of his water bottle, just to have something to do with his hands. “We talked about how he met Sam and Phil.”

“Oh, yeah?”

“I’m not gossipping to you,” he says.

Sapnap frowns. “It’s not gossipping. It’s including your best friend in the important milestones of your life. Dream has potential, George.”

“I know he has potential. I don’t need you to be involved in it,” George says.

“Fine,” Sapnap says. “No, that’s fair. That’s fair! You don’t have to tell me anything.”

“No, I don’t.”

They run in silence for a few hundred metres. George can hear all the cogs whirring in Sapnap’s brain. He’s fairly certain steam is about to spill out of his ears.

Finally, he bursts out with, “I just want to make sure he’s right for you. I want to make sure he treats you right, and you get along, and don’t get your heart broken.”

George gives him a look.

“I know you don’t need protecting,” Sapnap says. “That doesn’t mean I don’t want to do it. You’re my friend, George. My best one.”

“You’re mine too,” George says, even though it doesn’t really need saying. “Just... let me go at this alone for a bit. I’ll tell you if anything happens. I promise.”

“Thank you,” Sapnap says, almost reluctantly. “Tell me immediately. In the middle of things, if you have to.”

“Ew! What the hell?!”

“What?” Sapnap asks. “I didn’t say anything that time. Get your mind out the gutter.”

“Fuck you,” George says. He doesn’t even bother speeding up at this point: Sapnap will match his speed easily. “Can we at least talk about something productive now?”

“What’s productive?” Sapnap asks.

“What do you think about the team now?” George says. “In terms of player ability. Or formation. Or anything.”

“I think we’re as good as we can get,” Sapnap answers seriously. “Especially with Dream, now. I think he’s really going to give us the advantage in the league. I’ve already told you this, you should stop listening to your doubts.”

“Shut up,” George says. “You would really put that much faith in him? He’s a good player, sure, but we’ve won matches without him.”

“I’m not saying we haven’t,” Sapnap says, “I just think that he’s going to give us such a big leg up that no one could even think about catching us up.”

George could almost agree. “Well, what do you think about the rest of the team, then?”

“I think Ant’s been working really hard,” he says, “he blocks nearly every goal we shoot at him now. And Punz, too. He’s less angry.”

“Less angry?”

“Remember when you first signed him, and he went after the ball every time it came close to him, attacking left, right, and centre?” Sapnap says. “He’s not doing that as much. He’s great solo, but he seems to be relying more on team work, too.”

“I’ve noticed that,” George says. “You’re right. He works better with the team. What about Fundy? He seems more confident on the pitch.”

Sapnap nods. “Totally. It’s like he understands it better, and he knows how to play it to his advantage now. I really do think we’re the strongest we have been in years. It’s just a shame Phil won’t play with us this year.”

“He might come back,” George says. Sapnap shakes his head before he even finishes speaking.

“No, he won’t. Have you seen how he looks at the team now?” Sapnap says, “it’s like he’s preparing to say goodbye to it. He’ll have the baby. If he does come back, he’ll stay benched. Maybe he’ll retire completely.”

“Do you really think that?” George asks.

Sapnap nods. “Watch him. Today at practice, watch how he looks at us. You’ll see.”

George isn't expecting it. Sapnap was right, and he wasn't expecting it.

When they get to the pitch, and once everyone had arrived, he sets up a five-a-side game. Phil sits on the bench, and George makes a point to keep track of his expression. He watches them like he's losing something. George isn't expecting it, the bittersweet look on his face, like he wants to be out there, but he knows he can't.

It strikes an icy fire into George's heart, like he's watching Phil slowly slip out of reach. He doesn't even know how to pull him back; and Sapnap's right. Maybe he *will* retire this year.

George wonders how they'll deal with it.

The team has lost so much since Schlatt, since he tore everything down around them and left them with little more than a massacre. Phil had been the glue keeping everything together until George could get back on his feet back then, and George doesn't want to have to force them through anything else. Even if this will be a natural end, it'll still hurt. He knows Techno and Wilbur will hate it, and that will throw everyone else off their game.

He stays out of the action when the game starts, instead watching the rest of the team play. Everything in his head feels like it's churning at a million miles an hour.

Sapnap, on the other side, catches his eye. George hears his unspoken question and flaps his hand in a dismissal. He still feels Sapnap's gaze on him, even when he throws himself into the middle of things and steals the ball from under Punz's feet.

"George!"

He can't help a carefree grin, then, stepping back over the ball and pivoting around it to kick it to Fundy. "Get with the game, Punz!"

George steps back to let Fundy and Techno take over volleying the ball back and forth. Bad keeps up with them well enough, and George trusts them enough to keep the game in check without him having to concentrate on the ball too much.

It leaves him free to analyse his players (not that he needs to anymore, but sometimes just having his eyes on them at all times soothes something in the lower quadrants of his heart. It's almost like the team plays better when he watches, too). Skeppy tackles the ball from Bad, shooting it across the field. He almost makes a goal, hitting the crossbar instead.

He's good at that, George thinks. He has good aim, and a lot of power behind his kicks. He gives Skeppy a thumbs up.

George gestures to Q, indicating for him to take George's place in the game. He does, jogging onto the pitch, allowing George to take his seat on the bench. Quackity melts right into the game, like he was there from the start. It's another quality George likes about his team: how they all work well enough together that no matter who's on the pitch, they'll do well with it.

He sits next to Phil on the bench, sitting in the silence for a while. Phil watches the team wistfully. George watches Phil.

"You're not coming back, are you?" he finds himself asking.

Phil frowns at him. "What do you mean?"

George looks back to the pitch. Wilbur has the ball. He keeps it tucked between his feet, dribbling it across the field. “You look at the team like you’ve already left it.”

Phil sighs. “I’m not leaving forever, you know. I asked Sam not to tell you yet.”

“Not to tell me what?”

“Once we have the baby, I’m not going to play anymore,” Phil says. He says it so simply, like it’s the most obvious thing in the world. George feels almost sick. “I’ve been thinking about it for the past few weeks.”

“For a few weeks?” George repeats. “Why didn’t you... why did you only just tell me now?”

“Because I knew it would hurt you,” Phil says, “and I didn’t want to tell you here.”

“Why not?”

Phil knocks his knee into George’s. “Because I can see it on your face. You think I’m betraying you.”

“I don’t think that-”

“You do. Maybe not in so many words, but you do,” Phil says.

George doesn’t reply.

“I’m not leaving the team,” Phil says, quietly. “I would never leave the team. I’m just not going to play on pitch anymore. Sam and I have been talking about it. He thinks I could help him with his admin stuff, and become sort of a co-captain for you.”

“And what do you think about that?” George asks. He can feel the barriers in his head rising, getting ready to defend him.

“I think it’s a nice idea,” Phil says.

“Just nice?”

George turns back to Phil in time to see him start chewing his lip. A cheer goes up from the pitch; someone must have scored a goal. “I would love to,” Phil says, “but not yet. I need time to think about it.”

“What is there to think about?”

“George.”

He can barely look at Phil. George scuffs the toe of his boot across the concrete. A few stones fall loose, scattering across the ground. “I’m sorry. I just... you’ve been here for so long. You’ve done so much for me and for the team. I don’t know what it’ll be like without you.”

“You’ll be amazing,” Phil says, “you already *are* amazing. You don’t need me to be that.”

“But we still need you,” George says. He picks at his nails. His hands are starting to shake. “I need you.”

“No, you don’t.”

“How do you know?”

Phil smiles at him. “Because I know you. And I know the team. They won’t let you fall, you know. Remember what I said about trusting them?”

“I do trust the team. I just can’t trust myself.”

“Why not?”

George sighs. “I told you. I’m afraid. I don’t know what to do anymore.”

Chapter End Notes

hope u enjoyed! let me know your thoughts.

this is actually one of my favourite chapters, i think. thanks for reading!

but i worked something out last night

Chapter Summary

revelations upon revelations. young love is so beautiful.

Chapter Notes

enjoy this!

chapter title from [lets dance to joy division](#) by the wombats.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“What were you and Phil talking about yesterday?” Sapnap asks, half way through their run.

George shrugs. His brain feels tired and sluggish today. Phil’s news had kept him up all night, and if it hadn’t been for Sapnap, he’s fairly certain he’d have spent all day in bed. “Not about much. He, um. He said he wasn’t going to come back to play.”

“What?”

“He’s not playing on the team again.”

Sapnap exhales heavily. “Jesus. Did he say why?”

George shakes his head. “Not really. Just that he and Sam had been talking about it, and he didn’t really want to play after the baby.”

“That’s fair enough.”

“I guess.”

“You don’t think so,” Sapnap says. He says it like an accusation, and it’s one that cuts George deep.

“We’ve never been a team without him,” George says, “what if we all fall apart as soon as he leaves?”

“I think you need to give yourself some credit,” Sapnap says. “You’re a great captain, and the team isn’t going to fall apart. We’re like a family. We’ve got this.”

George sighs. “I hope so. I really hope so.”

“Well, I know so,” Sapnap says decisively, “and you don’t have to worry about a thing. You know, we’re going to go train our butts off, go win the league, then we can worry about Phil and the team, and all the dumb PR stuff. Just focus on the game for now. Okay?”

“Okay,” George says. He feels a smile bubble up his throat, unbidden but not unwelcome. When Sapnap sees it, he grins too.

“Okay,” Sapnap repeats. He says it again, a second time, and then a third, until George shoves him.

“Shut up.”

There is a long pause. Sapnap says, “okay.”

He starts laughing hard enough to trip himself up, even though nothing is even that funny. George watches him stumble into the grass and makes the executive decision to leave him there.

Dream approaches him the next day after practice. George looks up from where he’s stuffing a bag of footballs back in the equipment cupboard, offering him a polite smile.

“Good practice today,” Dream says. George finally gets the balls to balance and shoves the door shut. Whoever opens it next can deal with the fallout.

“Yeah.”

Dream pauses. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” George says. He’s still distracted with Sam and Phil and the upcoming league matches. He’s pushed aside everything with Dream for a moment of clarity, only to find that Dream had been the most straightforward thing he could have thought of. “I’m just… tired.”

“Oh,” Dream says. “Well, we haven’t really spoken since we went out the other day. I was wondering if you wanted to go get a drink now. I’ll drive.”

George sighs. “That… sounds great, actually. Thanks.”

“Of course,” Dream says. He smiles at him. It’s more genuine than the one George had offered. “You ready to go now?”

George nods. He pushes once more on the equipment cupboard door, making sure it’s held tight, before following Dream out of the club.

Once in his car, they drive to the same pub that Sapnap had taken them to. It feels like years ago now. George steps through the door and feels something undo in his spine. He almost relaxes.

“You look better already,” Dream says. He leads George over to a two-seat table. George can’t do much except follow him. When Dream sits, so does he.

“I have a lot going on,” George says. It’s not quite an explanation.

“I hope I’m not contributing to that too much,” Dream says.

George shakes his head. He puts his elbow on beer-sticky wood. “You’re the least confusing I’ve got going on right now. Which is saying something.”

“I’m glad to hear that,” Dream says. “What more confusing things do you have going on, then?”

George rubs his hands over his eyes. “Sapnap hasn’t told you already?”

Dream at least has the gall to look slightly sheepish. “He told me a bit. That Phil was thinking about leaving for good. But that was kind of obvious.”

“Yeah,” George says. “Is that all?”

Dream nods. “Yeah. He wanted to say more, but I said if it’s about the team, I’d rather if you told me. From what I’ve gathered, it hit you all pretty hard.”

“You can say that again,” George says. “I guess I owe you an explanation.”

“You don’t have to tell me.”

“No,” George says. He shakes his head. “It’s... about time. Maybe it’ll help me to tell someone about it, anyway.”

“Then, sure,” Dream says. “You know you can tell me anything.”

He barely knows where to start. “We used to have a player. Schlatt. He was great,” George says, “we got along, mostly. He was a good player. Worked well with everyone. I thought we’d finally finalised our team.”

“You thought?”

“It was the beginning of the season,” he says. It’s almost weird, recounting everything for fresh ears. The words taste sour and old on his tongue. “We had just started training for some competitive matches. One day, I get to the pitch with Sam. No one else is there, yet. Except for Schlatt.”

Dream inhales like he wants to say something. He settles for, “what happened?”

“He’d torn up our turf,” George says. Saying it aloud makes him want to cry. “Broken the seats. Destroyed our club. He was just sitting in the middle of it all. Like he was *proud*.”

The breath George lets out is shaky. He says, “Sam didn’t know what to do. Neither did I, really. Schlatt just stood up, walked over to us. He said that he was leaving. He said he was going to take the club with him, that if he couldn’t have it, no one could.”

“That’s awful,” Dream says. “I’m sorry, George. You and your team didn’t deserve that.”

George sniffs. “I couldn’t face them for a week. How could I let that happen to my team? How could I let him destroy us like that?”

“It wasn’t your fault.”

“Wasn’t it? I signed him. I took responsibility for him. Look where that got me.”

Dream nudges his foot under the table. “Is that why you were reluctant to sign me, too?”

George nods. He hates it, he hates this weakness. Dream’s pity makes him feel almost worse.

“I’m sorry,” Dream says. “I would never do that. I wish I could change what happened for you.”

“It’s not your fault,” George says. “And I know you wouldn’t now. I was just afraid to start with. And now Phil’s going to leave.”

“He’s not leaving fully.”

“He might as well be. He was the first person to see what happened,” George says, “after me and Sam. He was the one who helped us clean up, and held the team together while we tried to find a new player, and when we had to train in parks while the pitch was repaired. I don’t think… I don’t think we would even be a team still, if he hadn’t been there. And now he wants to leave.”

“He’ll still be there for you,” Dream says, gently. “He wouldn’t leave you or the team high and dry.”

“I know that,” George says, because he does, and he hates how he knows it. It nullifies all of his irrationality. “Of course I know that. It still hurts.”

“It will,” Dream says. He stills his foot, instead moving his hand across the tabletop until it lays palm up in the centre. George knows he’s waiting for him to put his hand atop it. “But the team has your back. You guys are stronger together. They’ll be there for you. So will I.”

“You’re part of the team, too,” George says. He bites his lip, swallows. Moves his own hand until it meets Dream’s. “Of course you’re part of the team now. I’m sorry it took so long.”

Dream’s fingers are longer and wider than his. They curl up over George’s palm until he can rub the pads on the back of George’s hand. “You don’t need to apologise to me.”

“I feel like I should. I don’t think I gave you the best welcome.”

“Well,” Dream says. “No. But I understand why now.”

“You’re so…”

Dream smiles at him. He’s almost cocky. “So what?”

“You’re so much,” George finishes. “I hardly even know what to say to you.”

“Then don’t say anything.”

“Don’t be stupid.”

“I’m serious!” Dream says. “Don’t say anything. Let me talk.”

“It depends what you’re going to talk about,” George says. He wants to sit back, but Dream’s hold on his hand is tight enough that he doesn’t ever want to let go.

“I’m gonna talk about you. And the team, and the league,” Dream says, “and about… us. So if I read any signals wrong, just tell me shut up. Or keep talking and embarrass myself.”

George stays silent. Dream chews the inside of his cheek, frowning like he’s thinking. He still hasn’t let go of George’s hand.

“When Sam first came to me about joining your team, I was kinda worried,” Dream says. “You know, I’d heard about you guys. You were already a great team, I didn’t wanna mess with your dynamic or get in the way, or whatever.”

“Then Phil said it too, said that he wanted me to replace him. You know Phil and I go way back?” George nods, “yeah. I was going to say no to Sam, until Phil asked too. I was really nervous.”

“Is that why you were late on the first day?” George asks.

Dream nods. "Yeah. I saw your face. You weren't happy."

"I was prepared to fire you on that alone," George admits.

"Of course you were," Dream says. It almost makes him laugh. His fingers flex against the back of George's hand. "I was just afraid. Of you, mostly. I wanted you to accept me the most."

"Me?"

"You're the captain," Dream says, "and... I had a crush on you. Not many people get to say they've played football with the person they're in love with."

"You're...?"

"Yeah."

George inhales. "Really?"

"Yeah," Dream says. "I didn't know what was gonna happen. If I was gonna make a fool of myself, I could have lost my dream job and my dream guy."

"Shut up," George says. He feels himself blushing, feels his heart beating loudly in his chest.

"It's true," Dream says, "I wouldn't lie. It's really true. I just wanted you to like me. I wanted to be enough for you."

George bites his lips. "The first time you played with the team, I barely knew what to do. I just... saw you. You got along with us, you played well with us. You were a great player solo too. When I spoke to Sam, and to Phil, and Sapnap, they all liked you. They all said you were perfect for the team. Sapnap said you were perfect for me, too. In not as many words, but... You were more than enough. You were too much."

"What did you think?" Dream asks.

"I thought you were a great fit," George says, "not that I wanted to admit it. I wanted to keep Phil. I didn't want to admit that you were good. That you could have been better. It would have meant acknowledging that Phil was leaving, and how I felt about you. I thought I hated you, and then all of a sudden, I didn't."

Dream smiles. "I'm glad you signed me, you know. I love this game, and this team. I love playing with you."

"I'm glad I signed you, as well," George says. He almost doesn't want to think about it, but he knows it's true as soon as he does. "Sapnap keeps saying that you're the best. He kept trying to get me to sign you before I did. Sam, too."

"Really?" Dream asks. George nods. "Were they conspiring?"

"Probably not," George says, "Sapnap just wants to see me happy."

"*Does* this make you happy?" Dream asks.

George doesn't answer for several long minutes. He almost doesn't know what to say. He squeezes his fingers in Dream's palm, before saying, finally, "yeah. I... I think it does."

The look Dream gives him is so full of emotion George can barely take it. "Good. It... it makes me

happy, too.”

“Good,” George echoes. When Dream laughs, half out of nerves and half out of relief, George laughs with him. He relishes in the warmth of Dream’s hand in his. “You know, we still have to talk about this. Properly.”

Dream groans. “You’re probably right.”

“I’m definitely right.”

“Come home with me,” he says, almost suddenly, quickly like he’s nervous. “We don’t have to do anything. Just... talk.”

“Just talk?”

“Yeah,” Dream nods. His brow is almost furrowed, like he’s unsure. “Just that. You keep saying we need to.”

“Okay,” George says. He almost smiles. Dream brushes the pad of his thumb over the top of George’s hand. “Okay.”

Dream’s flat is... not what George expected.

It’s clean - ish. There are books and magazines and a crumpled copy of The Sun scattered across the floor and the coffee table, there are mismatched cushions on the sofa, there’s half empty cups of water and tea on the sideboard. Dream looks like he might be embarrassed about it.

Especially so when his cat immediately starts wrapping herself around his legs, tripping him up into George.

“Oh, God- Patches, no!”

George grins. He kneels down, holding his hand out to the cat. She sniffs it tentatively, before butting her head against his palm. “Patches?”

Dream groans. “Of course she likes you. Yeah. Patches. She won’t leave you alone now.”

“Then I’ve passed the ultimate test,” George says. He runs a hand over her back. “I guess you can’t get rid of me, either.”

Dream grins. “That sounds like the opposite of a problem, you know.”

“Are you always this flirty?”

“Only around you.”

George stands up again. “Shut up.”

“What? It’s true.”

“You’re such an idiot.”

“For being honest?” Dream laughs. “Come on.”

Dream sits on his couch. One of the throw pillows crumples beneath him. He gestures for George to sit too, and he does, trying to keep at least a metre between them. There’s a silence, one that starts edging into awkward.

“So,” George says. “Us.”

“Us,” Dream agrees.

George bites the corner of his lip. His cheeks are warm. “Yeah. Um. What… what are we?”

“What do you *want* to be?” Dream asks.

“What do *you* want to be?”

“I think….” Dream pauses. “Boyfriends?”

“Boyfriends.”

“Do you-?”

“Yeah.”

Dream smiles. “Boyfriends, then.”

“Yeah,” George says. “Boyfriends.”

He feels giddy. The butterflies in his stomach start to wake up. He feels them start to churn up bile and nerves and sickly sweet feelings, the ones he’s tried his best to suppress over the years.

“What about telling people?” Dream asks. “What are we gonna tell the team?”

“They probably already know,” George admits. “At least, Sapnap will know, and he won’t be able to keep it a secret. We’ll have to tell Sam, just because we technically work together, too.”

“Right,” Dream says. “Of course.”

“He’ll be fine with it,” George hurries to say. “He won’t care, if that’s what you’re worried about. If anything, he’ll change the company rules just to make sure we can.”

Dream’s hands tap on his knees, like he’s nervous. “I’m not worried. What about the league?”

“What about it?”

“Well, if people find out that we’re, well, dating,” Dream says, “if we are dating.”

“We’re dating.”

“Cool,” Dream says. “Then… what if people find out? They might start questioning the team. Or our ability to play. Or what if we break up?”

“We should cross those bridges when we get to them,” George says.

“Should we?”

He nods, “Sam will field a lot of speculation. We don’t need to worry about our playing. We won’t

lose our jobs, I'll make sure of that, and so will Sam," George says. He still feels a spike of concern at Dream's words, even despite his reassurances.

Dream nods. "Okay. Then..."

"Then we're dating," George concludes. He feels his heart skip a beat. "Boyfriend."

Dream grins at him. He looks like he has the same sugary feelings and butterflies lodged in his stomach. "I guess we are."

The silence is less awkward now. George feels his heart beat so loudly he's certain Dream could hear it. He says, "Sapnap is going to have a field day when he finds out."

Dream wrinkles his nose. "You can weather that storm."

"I'm not doing it alone."

"He's your friend."

"You're my *boyfriend*."

He keeps saying the word, testing it out in his mouth, wrapping his lips around the letters. It almost fits. It's almost perfect.

The way Dream blushes too, flushing red and highlighting the mole next to his ear and the scar on his cheek, clashing with his eyes, is reassuring, at the very least. George watches the glow rise up across the bridge of his nose, watches the way it melts across his face, like Dream thinks it's perfect too.

"Stop looking at me like that."

"Like what?"

"Like I'm the best thing you've ever laid eyes on," Dream says. He lifts his leg up, poking his toe into the flesh of George's thigh. "Stop staring."

"I'm not staring," George says. He looks away, though, drawing his gaze down to Dream's kneecaps, and then at Patches sprawled across the carpet. He hears the look Dream gives him. "Shut up."

"I didn't say anything."

"You were thinking something."

"I wasn't," Dream says. It sounds like he's lying.

"Yes, you were. Tell me what it is," George says. He still doesn't look back at him.

Dream sighs, "I was... thinking about you."

"Don't be stupid."

"I was! You're always stuck in my head."

George grimaces. "You're such an idiot."

“That’s no way to talk to your boyfriend,” Dream says. He chews on the tip of his tongue. “Look at me and I’ll tell you what I was thinking.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

George lifts his eyes back up, faltering on the still-pink of his cheeks before meeting Dream’s eyes. “What?”

“I was thinking about how much I’d like to kiss you,” Dream says, like he has no shame. Even though George can see in the way he’s gnawed through the skin of his lower lip.

“I...”

Dream’s hand moves. George watches his fingernails dig into the skin of his palm. “That’s too much. I know that look. I’m sorry.”

“No, it’s,” George inhales slowly. It’s like there’s a mess of wires all tied up in his head, and he can’t find the right ports for them. “It’s okay. Just. Not right now? Not yet.”

“That’s fine,” Dream says. He sounds desperate. “Of course that’s fine. I’m sorry. I didn’t... I didn’t make you uncomfortable, did I?”

“No,” George says, “no! I’m fine. *I’m* sorry.”

“For what?” Dream asks. There’s tension threading through his voice, tight and reedy. George hates it. “I didn’t mean to push you too far. Fuck.”

George reaches out. He hooks his fingers in between Dream’s, drawing his fingernails away from his palms. Beneath them are small half-moon divots. When George runs his finger tips over them, Dream startles. “It’s okay. Just not yet. Okay?”

“Okay,” Dream says. He doesn’t sound certain. George supposes it’s the best he’ll get for now.

He gets home late. Later than he expected.

Sapnap is waiting for him outside the front door. Which he didn’t expect either.

“You have a key.”

Sapnap jumps up. “Would you rather find me waiting for you outside, or waiting for you on your couch?”

George shrugs. It’s a good point, actually. “Why are you here, then?”

“I came to see you,” Sapnap says, “I heard you left the club with Dream, earlier.”

“Who the fuck told you that?”

“Doesn’t matter,” Sapnap dismisses, “so? Did you? What happened?”

George glares at him, digging his door key out of his pocket and shoving it into the lock. “I’m not telling you.”

“So you did leave with him,” Sapnap says. He follows George into the house before he can slam the door. “What happened? Tell me.”

George sighs. He tucks his key back into his jacket pocket. “Fine. I left the club with him. We went out to the pub for a bit.”

“A date?”

“...kind of.”

“A date!”

George makes a face. “I talked to him. About Schlatt. And Phil. We talked a lot.”

“You told him about Schlatt?” Sapnap asks. He sprawls across George’s couch like he owns it, inviting George to sit next to him. He does, after nudging Sapnap with his foot. It’s a fool’s errand, since Sapnap molds about as well as liquid does, and as soon as George sits down, he melts back into his side.

“I told him about Schlatt.”

“What did he say?”

“He said he understood,” George says. “He says he gets why I was reluctant to sign him, and that I shouldn’t feel bad. Then he... he said he loved me.”

“What?”

“He said he loved me.”

Even repeating it now doesn’t feel quite real. George half suspects he’ll wake up tomorrow and find out it had all been some stupid dream. He tries to ignore just how heartbreakingly real that will be.

“Holy shit,” Sapnap says. “Well, what did you say back? Did you just stare at him like a fish out of water, or were you, you know, cool and suave and said it back?”

George shoves at him. “I was, you know. Shocked.”

Sapnap raises an unimpressed eyebrow. “Shocked.”

“Wouldn’t you be?”

Sapnap raises a second unimpressed eyebrow. “Sure. I would have still been cool, though.”

“I was definitely cool.”

“Did you cry?”

“What?!”

“Did you cry?”

“...No.”

“You sound unsure,” Sapnap says, like he’s playing devil’s advocate and having the time of his life.

“I’m not unsure.”

“I bet you cried.”

“I did not cry when Dream said he was in love with me,” George says. He shoves Sapnap again.

“Okay, George,” Sapnap says, “so what else happened, then? Why are you home so 1- did you go home with *him* ?!”

“Sapnap-!”

“You are so dirty! Oh, my God, I can’t believe you went home with him,” Sapnap says. He grins, mostly to himself. “Get it, George. Holy shit.”

“I-! We did not do anything,” George says. “We just talked.”

“Talked, or *talked* ?” Sapnap says. George gives him the most disgusted glare he can muster.

“Talked, thanks,” George says. Then he lets himself smile. “We’re boyfriends, now.”

Sapnap shrugs, “about time. That’s not a surprise.”

“Sapnap!”

“I mean, I’m happy for you both,” Sapnap says, “of course I am. But surely you knew this was gonna happen? I mean, it’s obvious. The way you both look at each other.”

“What do you mean, the way we both look at each other?” George frowns. He can’t tell if Sapnap’s tone is genuine or teasing - or some godforsaken amalgamation of the two, which has been known to happen.

Sapnap sighs. “You look at him like he’s the only guy in the world.”

“I don’t.”

“You do,” Sapnap says, “and he looks at you the same way. It’s sickening.”

George stares at him. “Sickening?”

“In like, a nice way, I guess.”

“Sickening in a nice way.”

“Yeah,” Sapnap says. George watches him bite his lip, stifling a laugh. “I’m happy for you, George,” he says, which would be almost reassuring and heartfelt and genuine if there weren’t threads of amusement in his voice.

“Sure,” George says. “I’d believe you more if you didn’t look like you were choking on your own laughter.”

“I’m not laughing,” Sapnap says.

“Yes, you are.”

Sapnap prods him with a finger. "I'm not. I really am happy for you. I'm glad everything fell into place."

"...Thanks."

"What are you going to do about the team?" Sapnap asks.

George shrugs, "I don't know yet. We kinda talked about it. Things are pretty new. Are you gonna be able to keep it a secret?"

"Wha- of course I am! Why would you doubt me like that?"

George just looks at him. Sapnap's face falls.

"Okay, well. I can try."

"That's what I thought," George says. "We'll have to tell Sam, anyway. I guess everyone else will find out when they find out."

"Sure," Sapnap says, "and the league?"

"What about the league?"

"Well, how do you think that's gonna go?"

George makes a face. "What do you mean? It'll go fine. It'll go like it always goes. Don't be stupid."

"It's a reasonable concern."

"There's nothing to even be concerned about," George says. Sapnap shrugs. "Seriously. The league will be fine. Dream and I will be fine. The team will be... fine."

"Great," Sapnap says. He squirms closer to George. "So, do I need to have a talk with Dream?"

"What?"

"You know, warn him to treat you well and be careful, and if he hurts you then I'll hunt him down," Sapnap says.

"If you do that, you won't even get a chance to *look* at Dream before I hunt you down myself," George says, fiercely. Sapnap must see the look on his face, because George hears him swallow his words and he doesn't say anything.

Chapter End Notes

shorter chapter today - i didnt intend it to be short, it just kinda.. happened that way.

anyway, final final stretch now! please let me know your thoughts, everyones comments fuel me so far.

thank you for reading :D

if i could be who you wanted

Chapter Summary

the end. george is on top of the world.

Chapter Notes

so... here we are. wow.

chapter title from [fake plastic trees](#) by radiohead.

thank you so much for reading.

remember: any underlined text is a link! click it!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The next few weeks pass in a blur. George spends more time on the pitch than he does off it, working out frantic nervous energy as the first match of the league approaches. Dream hardly stops looking at him when he's there, each time his gaze gets hotter and hotter until George feels like his very clothes are burning off of him. Someone's bound to notice, sooner or later.

They do drills upon drills upon drills, and George almost wears a hole in the pitch with the amount of pacing he does. Sam buys cardboard cups of coffee every time he attends one of the sessions, and they share them in his office. Each time, George gets worryingly close to stress-induced tears. Each time, he gulps black coffee and tries not to think about it.

Sapnap sends him links to meditation guides. George ignores each one. Dream holds his hand whenever they're alone; in the locker room, on the pitch, in the car. One time, he had put his hand on the centre console and held George's hand all the way home.

George had raved about it to Sapnap for about a week straight, after. It's something he'd made Sapnap promise to take to his grave.

Slowly but surely, the league approaches. The first match of the season. George feels vaguely ill whenever he thinks about it for too long.

Sam invites him into his office one Tuesday. He has two cardboard coffee cups in his hand, and his laptop wedged precariously under one arm.

George gestures to Dream to wait, that he won't be a minute, before following. Sam holds the door to his office open with a foot, and as George passes, he takes one of the coffees from him.

"You're stressed," Sam says. He lets the door close. George sighs. "Don't deny it, I can see it. You're stressed about... the league. About Dream? About Phil."

"I'm always stressed about the league," George replies. He ignores everything else Sam had said.

“Understandably,” Sam agrees, “we all are. But what about Phil?”

“What about Phil?”

“You’re not happy with him,” Sam says. He doesn’t hold back. It’s something George usually appreciates, but not now. Not today.

He swallows some of the coffee. It’s too hot. “Of course I’m not happy with him. He doesn’t want to come back to play, does he? Why would I be happy about that?”

“I’m not saying that,” Sam says.

“Then why are you so surprised that I’m not happy with him?” George asks. He bites his tongue. “Sorry. I... You’re right. I am stressed.”

Sam gives him a pitiful sort of smile. “I thought so. But Phil will be okay. And so will you.”

“I know. I think.”

“So tell me about Dream, then.”

George crumples his brow. “I don’t know what you want to hear about him.”

“Yes, you do,” Sam says, “neither of you are exactly subtle.”

“... Sorry.”

“Don’t be. Just make sure you keep us in the loop, okay?” Sam asks. “At least, keep me in it. I am technically your boss.”

George offers him a tense almost smile. “Okay. Thanks, Sam.”

“Of course. You have Dream waiting outside, don’t you?”

He’s almost embarrassed to say so. He runs his index finger over the grooves in the coffee cup. “Yeah. He’s been giving me lifts home the past few weeks.”

“I’m glad you’ve warmed up to him,” Sam says. He gives George a look like this is what he expected all along. “He’s not so bad, is he?”

“I guess he’s okay.”

Sam lifts an eyebrow at him. “Okay?”

George chews his lip. “Okay. Thanks again, Sam. I’ll see you tomorrow, right?”

“I’ll be here,” Sam says. “See you, George. And get some rest, you look dead on your feet.”

“I kinda feel it, too,” George says. He gives Sam a final small smile, before turning and exiting the office. It’s true: the emotional and physical toll the league, Phil, and Dream have taken is becoming a lot. He wants to go home and sleep for a week, but he can’t.

“You okay?” Dream asks. He’s leaning against the wall outside Sam’s office, shoulder against the drywall. He had both his backpack and George’s duffle bag at his feet, and he picks them both up before George can even make a move towards them.

“I can take mine,” he says, almost petulantly. He doesn’t really want to, though.

Dream gives him a look. He shifts the backpack to his shoulder and George’s duffle to his left hand, leaving his right free to curl between George’s fingers. “No, you can’t.”

George doesn’t even have it in him to argue.

The week before the first match is hectic. Sam is on the phone for longer than he’s off it. Phil barely makes it to the pitch, he’s got doctor’s appointments and shopping and paternity leave. The rest of the team seem distracted, so much so that it starts eating away at George too. He knows it’s just pre-game anxiety, but that doesn’t make it any less frustrating.

Dream and Sapnap are the only things that seem to hold him together. Sapnap spends several nights at his, and they watch movies and eat pizza and share duvets on the couch. Dream sends a huge bunch of roses to his doorstep, with a cheesy little note tucked between the buds. George pins it to his fridge when Sapnap isn’t looking.

He’s too overwhelmed to properly handle the training, so he lets the team come up with drills and minigames for now. He knows they’re at their peak, that the team is the best he’ll ever get it. George knows he has nothing to worry about it. It still does very little to soothe the nerves churning around in his stomach, though.

There’s four days before the match when the team stage an intervention of sorts.

Sapnap announces it at practice. He steals George’s whistle and calls everyone around the bleachers, standing on one of the seats with a suspicious looking grin. George can’t be bothered to call him out on it - whatever happens, will happen. He’s been friends with Sapnap long enough to know that he’s an unstoppable force when he wants to be.

“Today, Dream and I have elected to cancel training,” he calls. George frowns at him. “Instead, we’re going to go down the pub and enjoy ourselves, have fun, let loose a little bit.”

Dream grins. He hops up to join Sapnap. George wonders if this could ever get any worse. “These are our last nights of freedom before the matches! We’ve all done so much work the past few months, and made so much progress, and now we deserve a break!”

Wilbur cheers. Techno elbows him. George wants to bury his face in his hands.

“Exactly what Dream said,” Sapnap says, regarding him like Dream is some sort of all knowing God. “Let’s go get wasted!”

“Maybe not totally wasted,” George calls. “We *do* have life-changing football matches to be playing in a few days.”

Sapnap amends, “okay, not totally wasted. But appropriately tipsy!”

George figures that’s the best he’s going to get. Arguing against Dream *and* Sapnap, when they’ve both made up their minds, is beginning to feel like a pointless endeavour. All he can do now is go along for the ride.

The ride turns out to be not so bad, thankfully. The pub is dark and warm. The chatter of other patrons is quiet enough to wash into white noise, and the grease and alcohol that sticks to every piece of furniture is beautifully familiar.

Sapnap orders a round of beers to start, and the team sprawl out on two of the fireside sofas in the back of the building. It's barely big enough for all of them, and Eret and Ant end up dragging a couple of chairs over. Dream pulls George to sit in his lap, which starts off looking like a terrible idea and ends up being an alright one, when he realises it means Dream puts his hands around George's waist and holds him steady.

No one questions it, either. Like it's just normal. George feels a small piece of fear break away, something he didn't even realise he was so worried over. It's relieving. Even Dream seems to notice when he relaxes, because he squeezes the flesh at his hips like a reassurance, and George feels his breath on the back of his neck

Bad orders several baskets of chips, the proper thick cut ones, and a mountain of them piles up on the low table between the two couches. Whenever Dream taps twice on his hip bone, George leans forward and snags two, one for each of them. It's easy, like they've been sat here together for years.

Sapnap smiles at him. George knows what it says: *you're happy, I'm happy. You look at peace, finally.*

“Alright, boys,” Wilbur says. He lifts his pint glass. The condensation on it slips between his fingers. “Here’s to the team.”

Skeppy is the first to respond, clinking their glasses together and saying, “to the team!”

It's louder than the noise level around them, and several heads turn, but George doesn't even care. Bad, Ant, and Fundy all join their cheers. The euphoria is welcome, George thinks. When Dream reaches to pick his own cup up and join in, his chest is pressed firm against George's back. He thinks he could stay like this forever.

Dream doesn't shout it. He doesn't say it properly, either. He says, “to George,” and he whispers it in George's ear.

George wants to do nothing more than kiss him.

He settles for taking Dream's glass and sipping from it, watching the playful annoyance on his face morph into something more sappy. The heat in his eyes ramps up, and George can't look away. Suddenly, it's like they're the only two in the room.

“You better not get like this during the match,” Dream whispers.

“Get like what?” George whispers back. These are words just for the two of them.

“Like you and me are the only people in the universe,” Dream says. He's still quiet, but George thinks he's never heard him louder.

He says, “I can't help it,” and gives Dream his glass back. The tips of his fingers are cold.

Dream's voice is soft on his vowels. His lips curl around the letters like he doesn't want to let them go. "It's like you're the only person here."

"Now you know how I feel when I look at you."

His eyes darken. George thinks he's beautiful. There is nothing but firelight between them. "You don't know what you do to me."

"Tell me," George says. He makes sure to keep it between them, keep it hidden in the cavity of his chest. "Tell me tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?"

He swallows. His breath catches. "Tomorrow. On the way home. When it's just us."

Dream's exhale is shaky. George feels it curl over his lips. He's stuck fast, until Skeppy tosses a screwed up napkin at them.

"Oi, loverboys!"

George hears more than sees the way Bad slaps Skeppy's shoulder. He pretends not to hear when Bad hisses, "Skeppy! They were having a moment!"

"We're literally in public, Bad, they can't just be eye-fucking each other all the time!"

"Skeppy!"

Dream chuck's the balled napkin back. George feels the way Dream's muscles tense and recoil with his movement. The napkin hits with the accuracy of a striker, right in the middle of Skeppy's forehead. "Shut the fuck up," he says, with the long-worn tone of someone who's had this discussion multiple times.

George wonders if they have. If Dream has been talking about him to the rest of the team. The thought makes him feel equally warm and prickly inside.

Bad gives them both a look, sort of like they're toddlers and he doesn't want to take care of them any longer. Then he turns his eyes to George, looking sort of apologetic. George shrugs at him, in almost acceptance. There's nothing really to apologise for.

"You are so annoying," George hears Skeppy mutter into Bad's shoulder. He elects to ignore it, in favour of turning all of his attention back to Dream.

"What do you think they would say if I quit right here, right now?" he asks Dream, only semi serious. It makes Dream laugh, and the grin on his face is worth it all.

Sapnap, sprawled half across the opposite sofa and half across Techno's lap (Techno's face is a picture), overhears. It's like he has a microphone attached to George at all times, listening to everything he says. "Don't you fucking dare."

"Don't you fucking dare what?" Wilbur asks, from the other side of Techno.

"George is threatening to quit," Sapnap says, loud enough for the rest of the team to hear, and like he just knows the chaos he's unleashed. George feels his face fall.

"George is *what* ?!" Ant exclaims, curling his brow into a frown.

George glares at Sapnap. Behind him, Dream laughs. “I’m not doing anything, shut up, Sapnap. You’re such an ass.”

The smile he gets in return is disgustingly self satisfied. George eyes the cups and glasses on the table in front of him, wondering if it would be worth it to drench Sapnap in ale.

Dream’s arm works its way around his chest. His chin rests on George’s shoulder. It’s painfully intimate. “Don’t even think about it.”

“Don’t even think about what?” George asks, like he doesn’t know. He plays faux innocence perfectly. Dream’s breath on his skin pulls goosebumps to the surface.

“Yeah,” Sapnap says. He looks more cautious now. “Don’t think about what?”

“Don’t worry,” George says sweetly. He pushes back against Dream’s arm, wondering how much give he has. Wondering if Dream will let him do it anyway.

Sapnap grimaces. Techno shuffles closer to Wilbur, like he can already see the crisis playing out before him. “That is not very reassuring of you, George.”

“George,” Dream warns. He doesn’t sound very sure of it.

He just smiles at Sapnap, like nothing is wrong. Dream’s arm relaxes around his shoulders, Sapnap isn’t expecting an immediate attack. He leaves it long enough and even Techno is shuffling back into his previous position.

This time, when he strikes, no one is expecting it. George lunges forward, Dream’s arm falls from around him. Techno can’t react in time, and Sapnap receives the brunt of the blast. Beer spills across the three of them, soaking Sapnap and the couch, and splashing Wilbur and Techno.

The face Sapnap makes is so worth getting kicked out of the pub. (Walking home with the three of them isn’t as great, especially when Sapnap takes it upon himself to pull George into a hug and smear sticky residue all over him.)

Dream doesn’t even do anything. He shrugs at the affronted face George makes at him, like ‘just desserts’, and just laughs when George grumbles, “some boyfriend.”

The day before the first match is surprisingly calm. George supposes they’re in the eye of the storm now. He isn’t sure if that makes it better or worse.

He wakes up to several messages on his phone, and spends a few minutes scrolling through them as the sun finishes rising. It sends beams of icy yellow light on his bedroom floor.

DREAM: Good morning :D Get some rest today, okay? I know you’re probably stressed. I’ll see you tomorrow and we’ll kick some ass.

SAM: See you tomorrow, George. Can you try and get to the pitch a bit earlier than usual? I want to go through some things with you and the team before the first matches.

SAPNAP: Wake up sleepyhead!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Its nearly match day!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

He only replies to Dream and Sam, resolving to ignore Sapnap for as long as he possibly can. Then, he leaves his phone on his bedside table and showers, working through his morning routine slower than usual.

It's a nice day. Fresh and cold, but the sun is still bright. Clear skies. Hopefully, the clouds will stay away until after the match. He hopes the good weather lasts. George drinks coffee standing at his most east-facing window, staring at the sun until it blinds him, trying to tell her to keep the rain away for the next few days. He wonders if she's even listening.

He thinks about what it would be like to do this with Dream. What it would be like to wake up slowly, and do no more than exist around each other. It sounds... nice.

He inhales. The ever present nerves wriggling around his stomach are surprisingly calm today. He wonders, in the back of his head, if they're just biding their time for tomorrow. For now, he relishes in their absence.

He spends the rest of the day in his living room, switching between watching match highlights on the telly and practising breathing exercises. Dream texts him several more times, detailing mundane things like what he had for lunch and the dogs he saw in the park. It makes George feel like he's right there with him.

Sapnap messages too, sending links to videos like 'best goals this year', and old Match of the Day episodes. George isn't sure if he's making fun or if he's trying to be nostalgic, but he watches every video Sapnap sends anyway.

The locker room on match day is, as always, chaos. Tensions and emotions are both rising - the more the clock ticks down, the higher they go. Skeppy seems like he's floating.

George sits on the bench like he has lead weights in his shoes. He's already changed, tied his laces, dotted all the i's. The waiting is the worst part. He's ready to go on the pitch, he thinks, except for how his hands can't stop shaking. He shoves them in his lap, under his thighs, until his leg starts bouncing up and down instead.

He watches Dream. He's distracted, jittery like the rest of them, dashing around the locker room with his kit only half on. George wants to take his hand and sit him down. The nervous energy is static, rubbing off on all of them.

It's Dream's first proper match with his team. It's George's first proper match with Dream.

He's terrified.

Sapnap kicks his ankle, drawing his attention away from Dream. "Hey."

"What?"

"Stop worrying."

George grimaces. Sapnap sits on the bench next to him. "I'm not worrying."

"You're so worrying," Sapnap says, "it's so obvious. You know we're gonna win, right?"

"Hopefully," George says.

"Definitely."

"Hopefully."

Sapnap shakes his head like whatever. "Okay, fine. Either way, we have a good shot. We have a great team. Everything will be fine. So, don't get stage fright on me, okay?"

"I know," George says. He clenches his fists, moving them to his knees until Sapnap covers his hands with his palms and squeezes.

"Do you?"

"Yeah."

"Good," Sapnap says, "we've got this. We've got the best team. We have the best captain, too."

"Don't be stupid," George says. He tries to bat Sapnap away, pulling his hands away and pushing at his shoulder.

Sapnap doesn't move. "Seriously! You're the greatest. Cut yourself some slack, George, the team wouldn't be here without you. We wouldn't be anything without you."

"Shut up."

"I'm telling the truth," Sapnap says, "everyone here would agree. You've done so much shit for us all, winning this match wouldn't come close to repaying you enough."

"You don't need to repay me for anything," George says. "Don't say that. We're amazing because each player here is amazing, not because of anything I've done. But thank you, I guess. I appreciate the ego boost."

Sapnap smiles, sympathetically. "I'd believe you more if you didn't look like you're about to be sick."

"I feel like I am."

"You know there's nothing to worry about," Sapnap says. "You know that?"

"Of course I know that," George says, "I'm still nervous. I can't believe we're really here."

Sapnap nudges him. "You don't need to be nervous. You're my best friend, dude. There's no one

else I'd wanna be here with. You've got this."

"...Thanks. You too, you know."

"Yeah," Sapnap says. They sit in silence for a bit. Techno sticks his foot out and trips Dream when he next starts jumping from wall to wall. "I know."

Once on the pitch, his nerves start to dissipate. The crowds seem to scare them off, and George replaces them with muscle memory - the grass beneath his feet is wonderfully familiar, and he concentrates on nothing else.

They shake hands with the opposing team. The Badlands, he thinks. The captain, at least, is kind looking. Their team isn't very intimidating, and he counts it as a small win.

The referee, this time one he doesn't recognise, blows her whistle. The team assumes their positions. They flip a coin, and the Badlands take the kick-off. Sapnap offers him a smile from across the centre circle. Dream does too, but his is distracted. He's focused on the game now.

George shakes his hands out. The Badlands mid player kicks the ball, and the game begins.

They chase it down towards Ant to start, too close for comfort, really. Bad and Punz are there to meet them, backed up by Fundy and Wilbur. George makes sure to stay nearer the half line, ready to receive if someone passes to him.

Dream stays close too, and George knows without even looking at him that he's waiting there for him. Sapnap runs forward to assist Bad and Punz, and they take possession of the ball.

Sapnap passes it to Bad, and Bad follows it through to Wilbur, who skirts the sidelines before passing to Dream as soon as one of the Badlands players threatens him.

Dream takes it, tucking the ball between his feet and dribbling it over the half line. George keeps up with him, staying several feet away, waiting for Dream to pass it. He does, and George stalls while he runs a little further up pitch, before volleying it back.

They move the ball that way, passing it back and forth before any of the other players can intercept. Before long, Dream is in perfect position to pass to Techno and he does. Techno makes an effort to shoot, and hits the side bar. It's disappointing, but they still have the rest of the game to take it back. Badlands still doesn't have a goal, and George is determined not to give them the chance to get one.

The Badlands goalie throws the ball back into play, and their players catch it easily. George runs after them, followed by Dream and Skeppy. Eret and Techno stay on the other side of the half line when George sprints over it.

Punz tackles the Badlands player, managing to kick the ball out from underneath them. Bad picks it up, kicks it to Fundy. Fundy dribbles it back towards George, who makes an effort to stay open, waiting for it. He passes to Sapnap instead, who dribbles back to the centre circle and meets George there.

George takes the ball, takes the exhilarated grin Sapnap offers him too, and kicks the ball. It's a

risk, but he shoots it across the pitch towards Eret, and thankfully, it pays off. Eret gets the chance to score, and when he aims at the goal, it goes in.

The crowd cheers, and so does the team. Skeppy launches himself at Eret, followed by Sapnap and, reluctantly, Techno. George slows to a jog, grinning as the ref blows her whistle. The score count goes up one.

They've got this. They've really got it.

The rest of the first half passes easily. They don't score any more goals, but neither do the Badlands. Once half time is called, George heads straight over to Sam.

"Not too bad, right?" he says. Sam passes a bottle of water over.

"Not too bad," he agrees. "That was a good goal by Eret. Shame Techno's didn't make it in."

George chugs half the bottle before handing it back to Sam. "I know. One nil is more than I could ask for, though."

"I agree. You, Dream, and Sapnap are playing well," Sam says, "so keep that up. We're on track to win, don't mess it up."

"God, I hope not," George says. He gives Sam a smile, before jogging back over to his team. He's met with slaps on the back and frenzied grins as they all ride the high of being in the lead.

"We're doing great," Sapnap makes sure to say, loudly and right in George's ear. "I told you. We're going to win!"

George pushes him away. "If we play like that in the second half, yeah, we will. So we have to stay with it, okay? Don't get slack just because we have the lead now."

There's a rumble of agreement. Everyone looks tired already. George can only hope that the Badlands team is also just as tired out.

He looks at Dream. He's slouched on one of the chairs, an open water bottle next to him. His hair is slicked back and his cheeks red, but George hasn't seen him look better.

Dream smiles at him. "You're making some great plays out there, Georgie."

"You, too," George says. He scratches the back of his neck. "Just gotta push it through now."

"We'll do that," Dream reassures, "of course we will. You wait and see."

Half time ends sooner than he expects it to. Dream squeezes his hand while they're still hidden outside the pitch, before they all file back onto the field. The ref blows her whistle again, and it all starts over.

They get the ball this time, and Dream takes it. It means the Badlands barely get a look in until five minutes into the half. Unfortunately, when they do get the ball, they manage to pelt it down pitch and score a goal. George hears Dream swear over their cheers, and his disappointment is palpable.

He sends him a hopefully reassuring look. They can still pull it back. They have to.

Fundy takes the sideline kick, passing it to Wilbur and then Sapnap. Sapnap passes it to George, and George dribbles it across the half line before passing it to Techno. This time, Techno doesn't make a pass at goal; instead, he dribbles it closer to Skeppy before passing it over.

Skeppy shoots at the goal. It goes just wide, skimming past the goal posts. George grimaces - this time, he can't quite hold back the flood of disappointment.

The Badlands goalie throws in. Techno gets in the way immediately, heading it down and towards Eret, who passes to George.

George takes the ball easily, dribbling it down towards Ant. Once there, he passes to Bad, who passes to Sapnap. They volley the ball between the three of them until Sapnap hands off to Dream, who takes the ball and runs with it, back towards the Badlands goalie.

George and Techno shadow him, waiting to receive. One of the Badlands players gets there first, though, tackling Dream hard enough to throw them both to the ground. The ref calls a yellow card, Dream puts a hand on his ankle, and George feels an icy spike of fear shoot through him.

He jogs over, skidding to his knees at Dream's side. "Are you okay?!"

"I'm fine," Dream says. He's still got a hand on his ankle, and George's brow furrows. "Seriously. I can still play."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure. It's nothing, it's just shock," Dream says. He moves his hand from his ankle to George's knee, using George as a crutch to lever himself up. "Don't worry. I'm okay."

"If you need to bench..."

"If I needed to, I would," Dream promises. George isn't particularly reassured, but he inhales heavily and nods.

"Okay. Good."

The ref blows her whistle again and George climbs back to his feet. Dream follows, and George is relieved to see that he isn't limping when he makes his way back to the centre circle.

They get the ball back easily enough. Dream doesn't seem in pain, thankfully, and he keeps up just as well as he did before. George finds himself keeping an eye out for him, though, waiting for something to give.

Nothing does, and they make it through the game. There's only a couple of minutes left, and they're at a stalemate. It's exactly what he didn't want. George can see Sapnap getting desperate, can see Techno getting frustrated, and the rest of the team slowing down. Badlands seem quick to notice, quick to take advantage.

He catches Sam's eye, over on the bench. He mouths something, something that might be, 'DO IT!'

George swallows. He steels himself. There's a scuffle in the centre circle, several Badlands players fighting Sapnap for the ball.

George throws himself into it, keeping himself open for Sapnap to pass to. Bad rushes forward to help too. Sapnap trips over the ball, and kicks it back to Bad.

Bad passes it to George, bypassing the Badlands players lingering around them. There's barely thirty seconds on the clock, and George knows it's now or never.

He inhales. The world narrows to nothing except for himself and the ball.

When he kicks it, straight from the half way line, he isn't expecting it to make the goal. He isn't expecting the cheer that goes up, from the crowd and from his team. He isn't expecting the whistle.

He isn't expecting the ball to make contact with the net the very second before the clock hits zero.

When he realises, when the world crashes back in around him, George feels his entire body jolt. The team have thrown themselves into a pile around him. Bad is on Skeppy's back, looking like he doesn't really want to be there but doesn't care enough to get down. Sapnap has an arm thrown around Punz's neck, and Wilbur has dragged Techno into a tight hug.

The only one still standing is Dream. He's watching George from the other side of the circle, and the centre has never felt so big.

George inhales. When he steps forward, Dream does too. When they're close, close enough to touch, Dream reaches out to lift George in his arms. George brings his hands to Dream's cheeks, and he can't stop his grin.

When Dream kisses him, when Dream presses their foreheads together and breathes himself into George's lungs, when Dream smiles on George's lips. It's perfect. They stand together on the centre spot and George feels on top of the world.

Chapter End Notes

beautiful final [artwork](#) by [yoana](#) (thank you!)

some more lovely [artwork](#) by [eve](#) (ily)

for now, thank you SO MUCH for being here. this little fic started off as a one shot and became something im so, so proud of :]. i couldnt have done it without u! it really does mean so much to me.

epilogue

Chapter Summary

“It’s you,” Dream says, “how could I not remember?” He pauses for a moment. The pad of his thumb brushes across George’s cheekbone. “I just think that... you were so much for me, too. Everything about you.”

George is quiet. “...Too much?”

Dream shakes his head. They’ve said these words before, George knows, he feels their memory on his tongue. “You were everything. You were enough.”

Chapter Notes

this really is the end, now..

i dont want to let it go either ;-;

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The first hour after the match passes in a blur.

It’s blink and you’ll miss it, getting swept up in Dream’s arms, and then in the arms of the rest of the team. Sam comes running out onto the pitch with the biggest grin George has seen in a while. They’re all herded off to the locker room before the team causes a riot on the field, and George finds himself stuck in limbo between so happy he can’t think straight and completely and utterly numbed to it all.

Dream doesn’t let go of his hand. The contact point, the warmth in his palm, grounds him enough to get him out of his kit and collapsed on the locker room bench. In exhaustion or because of how overwhelmed everything is, George isn’t sure. Maybe both.

“Holy shit,” Sapnap says, once the locker room door shuts. He looks shell shocked.

“Holy shit is right,” Wilbur says. He pulls his shirt off, exhaling heavily. He looks completely drained. George wonders if he looks much better.

“That goal at the end?” Sam whistles, “George. That was incredible.”

George sighs. “Thanks. I think I pulled a muscle doing it.”

It makes everyone laugh, but their laughter is at half capacity. George thinks even speaking is tiring everyone out now.

“You know, it’s true,” Dream says, once they’ve all turned back to their own conversations. “It was a great goal. People will be talking about it for years to come.”

“Oh, please.”

“I’m telling you!” Dream nudges him. When George leans down to pull his socks and shin pads off, Dream does too. “It’s iconic. You’ll find yourself in one of those football goal compilations, I’m calling it now.”

George shakes his head. He rolls the socks down, squeezing them into tight balls and shoving them in his duffel bag. He’ll sort them out later, probably. “Don’t say that. It wasn’t that impressive. But, thanks. I... I don’t know if I’d have been able to do it without you on the pitch.”

“What do you mean?”

He pauses. His skin feels like ice all over. George’s cheeks burn blue. “I’ll tell you later.”

“You keeping secrets again?” Dream says, raising one eyebrow like he’s really bothered. George knows he really isn’t.

“Secrets?” he repeats. “I’m preserving my dignity.”

The way Sapnap snorts when he says that is greatly appreciated. George’s face falls. Dream laughs, and George kicks Sapnap in the ankle.

“Sure,” Dream says. “Dignity. That’s what we’ll call it.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing,” Dream says, with a grin buried deep in his tone, “it’s a secret.”

George mock glares at him. “Fuck you.”

His grin rises to the surface. Even Sapnap laughs. George just grimaces at them.

“I still think you should get the red one.”

Phil hums, rubbing the cotton of a baby onesie between his thumb and forefinger. “I like the blue though.”

“Blue is weak.”

“Techno!”

“Hey, I’m just saying,” Techno says, holding his hands up in mock surrender. Hanging from his fingertips is a collection of varied baby-sized clothes.

“Blue isn’t weak,” Phil says. He hooks it over Techno’s index finger before picking up the red one too. “But I guess the red one is nice, too.”

“Exactly,” Techno says, like he knew Phil was going to choose both all along. “Where now?”

Phil shrugs. He glances around the racks of onesies, toying with the tiny laces on a baby boot. “I don’t know. Daywear?”

“What sort of daywear do babies need?” Techno asks, wrinkling his nose. “They don’t do anything.”

“I don’t know. It’s just on my list.” Phil folds the slip of paper over a few times, tucking it into his back pocket. “I guess the baby could just wear onesies all day, anyway. They’d look dumb as fuck in a pair of elasticated baby jeans, right?”

“Oh, absolutely,” Techno agrees. “We should get some, right?”

Phil grimaces, “yeah, probably. Babies are so expensive.”

“I hate them,” Techno says. He sounds almost genuine. “They make a mockery of the economy.” Phil laughs.

The racks of baby jeans and t-shirts (all of which are stupidly, appropriately, and almost cutely small) are nearby. Phil stands in front of a stack of folded shirts and stares at them all, lost. “Are we supposed to choose one?”

“I guess so,” Techno says. He shrugs. One of the onesies on the hangers on his fingers slips a little, one shoulder coming free. “You know, why do babies even need so many colours? What use do they have for them?”

“I don’t know,” Phil says, “I guess we could get one of each. For… variety. Or something.”

“Why do babies need so many t-shirts? Why do they need *variety*? They’re only going to grow out of them in two months,” Techno says.

“I have no idea,” Phil says. Still, he picks up one of each colour, stacking them in Techno’s arms. “We can always take them back, right?” He sounds like he’s trying to justify it to himself.

“Probably,” Techno says. “As long as they’re not covered in vomit, or whatever.”

“Why would they be covered in vomit?”

“Listen, Phil,” Techno says, deathly serious like this is the most important thing he could ever say, “babies have no respect for society. They’re disgusting little freeloaders who don’t even clear up after themselves. The economy is falling apart, and who’s fault is it? Babies, Phil. Babies.”

“What are you even talking about?”

“The infant uprising,” Techno says, like it’s in no way abnormal.

Phil frowns at him, unsure quite what to say. He picks out a small pair of elasticated baby trousers. “Okay, Techno. Okay.”

The first twenty four hours is as exhausting as actually playing is.

They have a PR thing around lunchtime, and George, Dream, and Sapnap are all expected at it.

Sam looks frustrated when they all turn up, barely five minutes late.

He's wearing half a suit, a navy blazer and jeans, looking positively frazzled and like he's one wrong step from committing arson on whoever ends up closest to him. George offers him what he hopes is a reassuring smile.

"You look like shit," Sapnap says.

Luckily, George thinks, there are no cameras rolling yet. It gives him ample opportunity to pinch Sapnap, hard.

Sam gives him a gracious smile. "You don't look much better. Are you guys ready?"

"As we'll ever be," Dream answers for all of them. It's his first official PR event as part of the team. To have it be after they win a match, and after their kiss on the field, isn't going to be easy. The breath he draws in shakes.

Sam gives them all three a look. "Okay. We'll field questions, we'll ignore the ones we don't like, you don't have to answer anything you don't want to, okay? We're here to talk about the match, and about the team. Nothing else, unless you want to."

They haven't actually talked about it. George looks at Dream, frowning slightly. He'd assumed they were going to ignore any questions about their relationship, but maybe Dream will want to answer them... Maybe Dream will want to share everything.

Dream looks back at him, like 'don't worry. I'll follow your lead,' like he can read George's mind.

It doesn't go as bad as George was expecting. Luckily, most of the questions really had been about the team. He supposes the potential relationship between a captain and his teammate isn't as important as winning the first match of the league is.

It's a relief. He gets to brag about Dream and Sapnap's talent on the pitch, and Sam gets to talk about where he's going to take them next. Sapnap launches into a spiel about how incredible George's final goal was, lasting about fifteen minutes, and by then, the session is pretty much over.

Dream looks like someone just dropped a bomb in his face, but he doesn't look hurt. George imagines it's the best he's going to get for now.

"You know," Sapnap says, after a few days, "I can't believe you actually kissed him."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you know," he shrugs, "you're not exactly the most adventurous soul. You blushed every time you held his hand, and now you're making out on the football pitch? In front of seventy five thousand people?"

George frowns at him. "I don't get it."

Sapnap brushes it off. "Don't worry, then. I just didn't take you for an exhibitionist."

“Sapnap!”

A week passes; Sam forbids them (George, mostly) from the football pitch. He also takes it upon himself to organise some sort of movie night for them, bundling everyone into George’s living room, which has nowhere near enough couches, nor is it in no way big enough for all fifteen of them.

Once settled, Sapnap forces them to watch some dumb pretentious indie film.

George hates it. He makes popcorn, and he hates it. He gets drinks, and he hates it. He sits on his sofa and puts his feet in Sapnap’s lap, and he hates it.

He’s fairly certain everyone else hates it too. At least, he hopes they do, because otherwise this night is going to drag on for an eternity.

“Do we have to watch this?” Wilbur asks. He’s curled up in the corner of the sofa, tucked against the arm, and looking far smaller than a man of his stature has any right to.

“Yes,” Sapnap says tersely. George feels a little piece of him die inside.

“No one else likes these films, Sap,” he says.

Sapnap whirls around. “What.”

“No one else likes them-”

“I heard you,” Sapnap says. His voice suddenly becomes icy and sour, like George just murdered a child in front of him. “I heard you the first time. And the second time. And the third time!”

“Oh. Well...”

“And I chose to ignore you,” Sapnap continues, “because these films are art. And they will enlighten you. And if there’s anything this team needs its exposure to true artwork and enlightenment.”

“Jesus Christ,” Phil mutters.

Sam puts a pair of headphones. He pulls his phone out under the guise of work. George wishes he could do that as well.

“So,” Sapnap says. He picks up the remote, holding it far out of the way. “We’re going to watch this film. We’re going to enjoy it. And you will not complain.”

He presses play. He doesn’t sit down yet, waiting until the beginning credits have played to stop blocking the screen. It’s almost like he’s afraid someone is going to come along and smash the screen. George thinks he isn’t too far off.

He sees, in the corner of his eye, Techno edging closer towards the power bank behind the screen. George bites down on his grin, saying, “I’m sorry, Sapnap. You’re right,” in an attempt to distract him.

It works; Sapnap turns to George with a suspicious frown. "What? Well, I mean, of course I am, but... why are you telling me?"

"No reason," George says. Techno's fingers stretch out to reach the plug. "Just that... I feel bad for making fun of your movie choice. I'm sorry if I made you feel like no one wanted to watch it. I'm sure it's a great film."

"Yeah," Sapnap says. He's still frowning. "It is. Thanks."

Techno pulls the plug. George really can't help his grin this time, and the telly flickers off. Sapnap whirls back to the screen, like someone just personally insulted him.

Wilbur cheers. Phil does too, and even Sam allows a small smile. Sapnap's reaction is textbook.

"What the *fuck* have you done?!"

A month passes. Dream starts spending evenings and slowly, slowly, starts spending nights, too. Whenever Sapnap doesn't, Dream goes on runs with him.

They return to the pitch. Phil is there less and less now - George knows they must be getting closer to the due date. He's almost nervous. The due date means Phil will have a kid, a real life child, but it also means he really won't be coming back to the club. At least, not for a while. It hurts, until he remembers to be happy for Phil as well.

Sam seems less busy too. He stays and watches them train for longer periods of time, giving George pointers and tips and the occasional thumbs up whenever he needs them.

George stops seeing torn up grass and broken plastic whenever he looks at the pitch. Instead, he sees Dream.

They end up winning the league. George isn't *surprised* but it's still a shock - a welcome one.

The energy post-game is tangible. Sapnap, for how exhausted he seems, leaps around the locker room like nobody's business, disrupting bags and shoes and making it a point to ruffle everyone's hair beyond fixing. Sam looks tired too, but in a good way. Like someone has just told him the best news of his life.

George knows how he feels. He collapses into the locker room bench, lets his head fall back against the wall with a thud, and finally, finally, he breathes.

Tomorrow, and for the week after that, the PR will be awful. It'll be messy and crazy and ten times more overwhelming than actually winning the game ever is. He won't get a good night's sleep for a month.

But it's worth it, he thinks. He looks at his team, at Dream, Wilbur, Techno. At Sapnap. At Sam, sitting in the corner on his phone, face set like he's ready to weather any storm for them.

It's definitely worth it, George thinks. He pulls his football boots off, shoving them into his duffle bag. Definitely, definitely worth it.

“George! George!”

Sam points at one of the reporters. George doesn't recognise them, nor the company badge they're wearing.

“How does it feel to finally win the league after what happened with your ex-teammate, J Schlatt, last year?”

George feels his vision tunnel just slightly. Dream puts a hand on his knee. “Um. Yeah, uh...”

“We can move onto a differe-” Sam starts to say, quietly, so only he can hear it.

“It's fine,” he replies, just out the way of the microphones before turning back to them. “It feels nice to win the league no matter what happened last year,” he answers, “but even with that setback, I'm really proud of what we've managed to achieve and all the things that have happened because of it. Schlatt was a great player when he played with us. But all of our players are great, and I'd like to think that, maybe, we have some even greater ones now.”

Everyone looks satisfied with that answer. Even Sam, which is a relief, since he spends the majority of press conferences with his face locked in a scowl.

Sam points at the next reporter, “What's it like, dealing with your relationship with one of your players?” they ask, “there's a lot of talk about Dream sleeping his way to the top. He's obviously one of your more favoured players.”

George makes a face. “Let's get one thing straight, I don't have *favoured* players. Dream plays in centre, with me and Sapnap, because we work well as a team, and he's a strong player in any position anyway. He didn't sleep his way to the top, either. In fact, I was completely against him joining the team until Sapnap and Sam wore me down. I'm sure if he slept with any of us, it would have been them.”

“Not that I did,” Dream interrupts. His grip on George's knee tightens just slightly, like *what the fuck are you talking about*.

The audience titters a bit. “Right,” George agrees, “not that he did. But I don't appreciate that rumour. Questions like this are one of the worst parts about dealing with a relationship with one of my players, as you put it. Thanks.”

“I think we'll be answering one more question today.” Sam says, like he can just tell how George is practically vibrating out of his skin now. He gives him a look, one that George chooses to read as approval, not a warning. It's easier to ask for forgiveness, he reminds himself, and no one would really blame him if he walked out right now.

He doesn't. The final question asked is, “if you have anything to say to the people who look up to you, what would you say?”

Dream answers. Somehow, it feels like he's talking to George as well as for him. “I would tell them

that eventually everything will be okay. Even when it doesn't feel like it - *especially* when it doesn't feel like it. And maybe, one day, we'll see them on the pitch too."

"What about the train?" Techno suggests. Wilbur holds it out, like two halves of a whole. Phil grimaces at it.

"What if one of the wheels comes off?" he asks, "what if the baby swallows one and chokes? Do you think you could be responsible for a hand in the death of my child?"

Techno makes a face back at him. "Fine, then. Wilbur, go put it back."

Wilbur goes. Phil sighs after him. "I'm sorry. I do appreciate you two trying to help."

"You don't have to be sorry," Techno says. It isn't the most reassuring thing he's ever said, but Phil relaxes slightly anyway.

"I'm just worried," he continues, "I don't want to get the wrong thing, and then have everything else go wrong because of one small stupid decision I made. Who knew toy shopping could be so difficult?"

Techno shrugs. "I'm sure we'll find something. Clothes shopping went alright, didn't it? Toy shopping can't be that much worse."

Wilbur returns with a much larger collection of toys in his basket than when he left. "I thought you were going to put one back," Phil says.

"I was," Wilbur agrees. He hands the basket to Techno. "Until I saw these on the way back, and I thought, damn, Phil's spawn needs to have some of this." He pulls out a small bag of felt football toys. Each individual ball must be no bigger than a child's fist. "Look. It's not so small that your baby will choke, but they're not too big either. They can be just like their dad!"

"That *is* quite cute," Techno says.

"Next," Wilbur says. He replaces the felt footballs with a raggedy doll dressed in a footballer's uniform. It's got the exact same number that Phil used to play. "Look at this! Isn't it perfect?"

"Wilbur's got a point," Techno says. That was exactly what Phil was afraid of. Once they team up, there's no backing down.

"I think these are so much better than the trains," Wilbur says. He pulls out another toy. This time, it's a sensory book, with a fluffy drawing of a football on the cover. He grabs Phil's hand, making him stroke his fingers across it. "Look! Feel it."

"I'm starting to see the theme here," Phil says. The book is kind of sweet, though.

The final toy is a blow-up goal. Phil vetoes it before Wilbur can even take it out, on the grounds that, "this kid can't even walk, yet, Wilbur, what need do they have for a blow-up goal?"

Dream is lying in his bed on their day off.

The sun shines through the half open blinds, filtering onto the highs and lows of his face. It makes him look ethereal from where George stands in the doorway.

“Come back to bed.”

Dream is much quieter in the mornings - especially the early ones. The sun is cold and frosty, but his voice is warm. George smiles at him. He looks like he belongs here. George feels like he belongs too.

George goes. He slides in beside Dream, sitting up against the headboard just slightly. Dream shuffles closer, puts his head on George’s thigh until he can look up at him.

“You look beautiful like this,” George says.

He smiles. It’s not his public smile. It’s not even his football smile. “Like what?”

“Don’t make me say it.”

“Tell me,” Dream says. “Come on, it’s just us here. Tell me.”

George sighs. He breathes out blue and green and gold. “You look like an angel.”

Dream’s smile tilts up into the beginnings of a laugh. George covers his grin before he can say anything.

“Shut up. You asked.”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“You were going to laugh.”

Dream moves, pulling George’s hand away. “Not at you. Just because... I think you look like an angel right now, too.”

“You were still going to laugh.”

He reaches his hand up, curling his fingertips around George’s cheek. “Only because I don’t know what to do with you. You remember when we were out at the pub?”

“Which time?”

“The first time without Sapnap,” Dream says. “When you told me about Schlatt.”

He does remember. George nods.

“I kinda think of that as our first unofficial date,” Dream says, “but when we were there, you told me that I was ‘so much’. Too much, maybe.”

“How do *you* remember that?” George asks.

“It’s you,” Dream says, “how could I not remember?” He pauses for a moment. The pad of his thumb brushes across George’s cheekbone. “I just think that... you were so much for me, too.”

Everything about you.”

George is quiet. “...Too much?”

Dream shakes his head. They’ve said these words before, George knows, he feels their memory on his tongue. “You were everything. You were enough. You *are* enough.”

“You say so many things,” George says. He puts his hand atop Dream’s, curling his own fingers around his palm. “You say everything I wish I could say to you.”

All Dream has to say is, “I know.”

He does. They both do.

Chapter End Notes

once again, thank u for reading! i am so grateful to all the support you guys have awarded me, even though im still not quite sure why or how..

End Notes

please leave comments, id love to know your thoughts <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!